

ISLAM IN THE BALKANS

H.T.Norris

Religion and Society between Europe and the Arab World



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H. T. NORRIS

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To Karen

*Land of Albania! where Iskander rose,
Theme of the young, and beacon of the wise,
And he his name-sake, whose oft-baffled foes
Shrunk from his deeds of chivalrous emprise:
Land of Albania! let me bend mine eyes
On thee, thou rugged nurse of savage men!
The cross descends, thy minarets arise,
And the pale crescent sparkles in the glen,
Through many a cypress grove within each city's ken.*

(From Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*)

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NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTION

In the spelling of Arabic and Islamic proper names and miscellaneous terms, I have followed the system used in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London).

H.T.N.

GLOSSARY

Abdal (Albanian, from the Arabic *badal*, (pl. *abdāl*). The spiritual hierarchy of the Sufis. According to Baba Rexhebi, 'those who have the capacity to change from any physical to any spiritual state'.

Āghā (Turkish). Formerly a military title but now largely honorific, applied to a tribal chief or a man in authority.

Amaut (origin obscure). Applied to the Albanians in Ottoman times and occasionally to Balkan Muslims other than the Bosnians. It is still used to denote Arabs of Albanian origin in the Middle East, especially in Syria.

Ashik (Albanian, from the Arabic *ṭashiq*). 'Lover', and occasionally a minstrel, who sings of the love of Majnūn and Laylā and other Arab and Persian lovers. In Sufi circles, it denotes a novice who aspires to initiation (e.g. in the *Baktāshī* order).

Ashura (Arabic, 'Āshūrā'). The tenth day of the month of *al-Muharram*. It is celebrated in Bosnia and in Albanian regions as in all Muslim countries and, according to Dr Cornelia Sorabji, worshippers at the Kadiri (*Qādīn*) Hadži Sinanova *tekija* (*tekke*, see below), now destroyed, used to offer paper cups of *Āshura* at the end of the celebrations on that day. Among *Baktāshīs*, in Albania and elsewhere, the day marks the end of the eleven days of prayer for the martyrs of Karbalā (see *Matem* below). In Albanian, *ashur* and *ashure* indicate a pudding served with walnuts, or a sweet round cake, which is eaten by Muslims, and especially by *Baktāshīs*, in order to celebrate Noah's sacrifice. The date in the calendar is May 16.

Ayini-cem (Turkish and Albanian). *Baktāshī* and other Alavid ceremonies (*muhabbat*) take place in a *maydān* or *cem*. Candles and lights form a major element in these 'ceremonies of light' (*gerāğ ayini*) where verse 35 of *Sūrat al-Nūr* (XXIV) is of singular importance. For full details, see Abdülkadir Haas, *Die Bektaşı*, Berlin, 1987, pp. 143–6.

Baba (also *atē* and *prind*). Literally 'father', a grade in the *Baktāshī* hierarchy. The director of an order who is responsible for dervishes in a *tekke* (see below), whether *ashik*, 'uninitiated', or *muhip* (see below), 'initiated'.

Bezistan (Turkish, Serbo-Croat). Covered (frequently domed) market-place. The design is often modelled on mosque architecture.

Bogomils. Followers of the Bulgarian priest Bogomil (loved of God), 'the first to sow heresy in the land of Bulgaria'. The movement was active by 950 AD and was to have a following in Macedonia and Serbia, whence it spread to Bosnia (see *Patarins*). Its doctrines, which were decidedly dualist, partly gnostic, and with a marked advocacy of renunciation of the world and its temptations, were influenced by *Paulicianism* (see below). It was iconoclastic and opposed to Orthodox Christianity.

Cheikh (Arabic *Shaykh*). In Albanian, *Sheh* is the title of the 'head of a Moslem

monastery, keeper of sepulchre' (Stuart Mann, *An Historical Albanian-English Dictionary* London, 1948, p. 470). A member of a *tarikat* (see below) who has the right to act as a spiritual guide. He has received this from his predecessor and ultimately back to the founder of the order by a chain of transmission (*silsila*).

Ciftlik (Turkish and Arabic). A farm, a country estate, government land.

Dār al-Harb (Arabic). The non-Muslim world. It is the duty of Muslims to struggle to convert them to the true faith.

Dār al-Islām (Arabic). 'The Muslim World', where the religion prevails and where the *Shāri'a* (see below) is practised.

Dede (Turkish and Albanian *Baktāshī*). 'Grandfather' (also *gjysh*), highest grade in the *Baktāshī* hierarchy. Supreme spiritual guide.

Dervish (a Persian term but one found throughout the Islamic East). Generally, in the Balkans, one initiated in the rules of a *Sūfi* order who has taken a Cheikh (see above) as his spiritual guide. Among the *Baktāshīs*, in particular, a *dervish* is not a mendicant, as sometimes in other orders, but one who lives in the spiritually stratified world of a *tekke*, where he has attained a status superior to a *talip* or *ashik* (see above), a candidate for initiation, or to a *muhip*, an initiated novice (see below). A *dervish* has progressed to the second degree and this entitles him to wear the *tac* or *taj* (see below). His status is below that of a *baba*. Most *Baktāshī* dervishes in Albania were celibate.

Devshirme (Turkish). 'Boy tribute' or 'tribute in blood'. A levy of Christian children, widespread in the Balkans, as elsewhere, for training in order to fill the ranks of the *Janissaries* (see below). They could occupy posts in the service of the Court and the Ottoman administration. The levy dates back to the 14th century in the Balkans.

Fakir (Arabic *saqīr*). 'Poor [in heart]': one who has renounced worldly concerns and who has become pure before God whereby the heart of the believer is emptied of all save God's presence (to cite Baba Rexhebi).

Ferman (Persian and Turkish). An imperial order.

Halifa (Arabic *khalīfa*). Caliph or successor. In *Sūfi* terms, one who has power and authority to transmit the teachings of the *tarikat* (see below).

Halvet (Arabic *khatwa*). 'Retreat and solitude', defined by Baba Rexhebi, in a *Sūfi* context, as a 'retreat of a *Sūfi* in an enclosed place for a set period of time where he evokes the name of God'. The *Khalwatiyya* was an important *Sūfi* order in the Balkans. The *halvet* is not exclusive to that order.

Hoxha (Serbo-Croat *hodža*; the Albanian word having as its plural *hoxhallar*, and its feminine form *hoxheshe*). Usually defined as a 'Muslim priest', or a religious teacher.

Hurufiyya (Arabic and Persian). 'Hurufism is described by Baba Rexhebi as 'an intellectual principle or tenet reflecting culture of the mind' (*dogme kultorore*). It expresses a distinct and eclectic view of man's place in the

Universe, God's nature and Islamic thought, as it was formulated in the works of Shihāb al-Dīn b. Bahā' al-Dīn Fadlallāh al-Astarābādī (martyred in 796/1394 by order of Timūr's son, Mīrān Shāh). His doctrines assimilated beliefs derived from Gnosticism, Sufism, Cabballism and Ismā'īlī ideas that are a feature of the *ghulāt* sects in the Middle East, e.g. the Druze. Two aspects are discernible:

- (a) Numerology and symbolism, divine in origin and supremely displayed in the heavenly text of the Qur'an, itself a miracle of numerology.
- (b) The imminence of the Divinity in Man which is mirrored in his physical form and in his facial features and contours as well as in the innermost depths of his soul.

Hurūfī ideas are discernible in Balkan Muslim literature, especially in Albania. Numerology of a non-Hurūfī kind, wherein the Qur'an is shown to be a miracle of numbers, may be read in Ahmed Deedat's *Kur'ani Mrekullia Më e Përsosur* (*Al-Qur'an the ultimate miracle*), Shkup, Macedonia, 1986, pp. 42–6.

Imām (Arabic). The leader in prayer. The Caliph and his successors, who, in the case of the *Baktāshiyya* in the Balkans, are acknowledged to be the following successors of the Caliph, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭalib (the Prophet's son-in-law): his sons, al-Husayn and al-Hasan, Zayn al-'Ābidīn, Muḥammad al-Baqīr, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, Mūsā al-Kāzīm, 'Alī al-Ridā, Muḥammad al-Taqī, 'Alī al-Naqī, al-Hasan al-'Askarī al-Zakī, Muḥammad al-Mahdī.

Imāra (Arabic 'Imāra). Public kitchen in which the officials of an endowed institution and the poor receive food.

Janissaries (Turkish *yeni-cheri*, 'new troops'). The *devshirme* system (see above) supplied men for this corps of regular infantry, in fact a semi-religious organisation dating back to the fourteenth century, which was one of the principal forces that brought about the Ottoman conquest. For a brief description, see Ernle Bradford, *The Great Siege: Malta, 1565*, London, 1961, pp. 82–3.

Kızılbaş (Turkish 'red heads'). A sect of the Shi'ite *ghulāt*, extremist 'Alīids, whose name is derived from the hats they wore in commemoration of the blood red headgear worn by the partisans of 'Alī at the Battle of Šiffīn (657 AD). Kızılbaş and *Baktāshīs* are sometimes confused since their practices and feasts have much in common, and honour is paid to common shrines. Today, they are almost exclusively centered in the Balkans in Bulgaria, near the Romanian border, and in Turkey.

Kutb (Arabic *qutb*, 'pole' or 'pivot'). Applied to the chief of a saintly hierarchy, who, according to Baba Rexhebi, 'usually remains unknown to believers and friends'. A *kutbu alam* is the founder of a *tarīka* (see below), Hājjī Baktāsh is the *kutbu alam* of the *Baktāshī* order.

Madrasa (Arabic 'school' or 'college'). *Medresa* is usual in Serbo-Croat and *medresë* in Albanian. Such schools were to be found in major towns or cities

and were often theological seminaries used for the training of teachers and *imāms*.

Mekteb (Arabic, 'elementary school' or office). In the Balkans, as elsewhere, a *mekteb* is of a religious intention, primarily to inculcate and acquaint the very young with the Qur'an and the Arabic alphabet.

Matem (Albanian; Arabic *ma'tam*). According to E.W. Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 'a place of assembling of women (and of men also) in a case of rejoicing and of mourning'. Now almost entirely understood in the latter sense, also as 'a place of wailing'. Among the *Baktāshīs*, the *matem* celebrates the martyrdom of al-Husayn at Karbalā, and, by extension, of all 'Alīd believers, especially those who were slain as infants. According to Gaspar Kici's *Albanian-English Dictionary*, Tivoli, Italy, 1978, 'a ten day fast of the Bektashi'.

Mesnevija (Turkish *mesnevi*, Persian *mathnawī*). A long poem that comprises verses that rhyme in pairs which are harnessed to any suitable metre. The most famous composition of this kind is the mystical *Mathnawī-yi ma'nawī* of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, referred to as *Mevlāne* amongst the mystics in the Balkans who greatly revere him and his poetry.

Mevludi (Arabic *mawlid* and *mawlūd*). Celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, 12th *Rabi'* I, hence panegyric poems for recitation and entertainment. The most famous *mawlid* is *Bānat Su'ad* of Ka'b b. Zuhayr and the *Hamziyya* of al-Būṣīrī, the latter often imitated. Both Albanian and Bosnian poets have composed considerable numbers of such poems and examples survive in Arabic script.

Muhip (Arabic *muhibb*, 'lover'). Initiate in a *Baktāshī tekke* who participates in all its rituals.

Murshid (Arabic 'guide'). Pathfinder and teacher, who must conform strictly to the rules of a Sufī order.

Müsāfirhana, (Turkish, Bosnian and Albanian). In Arabic, a *musāfir* is a 'traveller' or 'passenger'. In Albanian, *mysafir* means 'guest'. An inn for travellers where they could stay free of charge for three days.

Namāz (Persian) and *namazi* (Albanian). Statutory prayers for portions of the day and night, for special occasions (*tregulla dhe lutje*) and also for private supplications. The term may extend to include ritual worship, in general.

Nevruz (Albanian). Persian New Year's day (*Nau-rūz*), March 21. Among *Baktāshīs* the day is a joyful one, since it celebrates the birthday of 'Alī, whose heroic deeds are sung on that day.

Patarins. Name specifically used for the Bosnian Bogomils (see above), although the Patarins originated in Bulgaria. According to Ivo Andrić, they put down deep roots in Bosnia and spread there on account of the shallowness of Christian beliefs in the country. He comments:

What is most certain and, for us, most important is the fact that Patarins knew how to adjust to Bosnian conditions; the fact that their faith thus

became the people's faith; and the fact that in so far as there did exist a criterion by which the country's internal organization could be judged or a palladium in Bosnia's struggle against foreign intervention, this faith carried weight. In their unequal, bitter fight with Catholicism, the Patarins had begun to erect that wall of stone between Bosnia and the Western world which in the course of time was to be enlarged still more by Islam and raised to such mighty heights that even today, though long since crumbled and fallen to pieces, it still produces the effect of a dark, demarcating line that one dare not step over without effort and danger. (*The Development of Spiritual life in Bosnia under the influence of Turkish Rule*, pp. 12 and 13.)

Paulicians. A sect, markedly gnostic, the followers of Paul of Samosta who lived in the middle of the 3rd century AD and who preached the doctrine of Adoptionism. This taught that Jesus was a mere man and that Mary did not remain a Virgin after his birth. At his baptism the holy Word entered into him, the Word being engendered by God himself who was One Person. At that point Jesus became a perfect being, brought about through the help of the Word alone (see S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, p. 19). From Thrace the doctrines of the Paulicians penetrated west into the Balkans. (Compare these doctrines with those of the Albanian poet Gylbegaj in Chapter 5.)

Pejgamber. Title of the Prophet Muhammad among the Albanians, corresponding to the 'Messenger of God' (*Rasūl Allāh*).

Pomaks (pl. *Pomaci*). Muslim Bulgars who principally reside in Southern Bulgaria in Rhodope near the Greek border and who are now reckoned to number some 270,000. This number is reduced from the former Muslim total in Bulgaria. The following account by Midhat Pasha, published in *La Revue Scientifique de la France et de l'Etranger, Revue des Cours Scientifiques* (2nd series), 7/49, 8 June 1878, p. 1152 (transl. as *The Nineteenth Century* [n. d.]), is an impression of the deeply-rooted nature of Islam in Bulgaria at that time. In its treatment it is also prophetic of the perennial dilemma of the Slav Muslims, including those caught up in the human tragedy in Bosnia today:

First of all, one must take into consideration that amongst the Bulgars, for whom one observes such a lively interest, there are more than a million Muslims. Neither the Tatars, nor the Circassians, are included in this number. These Muslims have not come from Asia to establish themselves in Bulgaria, as is commonly believed. They are the descendants of those Bulgars who were converted to Islam at the time of the conquest and during the years that followed. They are children of the same country and of a similar race and are descendants of the same stock. No other tongue but Bulgarian is spoken amongst them. To wish to uproot this community of one million inhabitants from their homes,

and to force them to be expelled from their country constitutes, in my eyes, the most inhuman act that one can commit.

On the strength of what right, in the name of which religion could we act thus? I do not believe that the Christian religion allows it and I know that civilization has its code and that humanity has its laws for which the nineteenth century professes great respect. Besides, we are no longer living in a time when one could say to Muslims, 'Become Christians if you wish to remain in Europe.'

It is also pertinent to remark that the Bulgars, in respect to the level of their intellect, are very backward. That which I have remarked about in regard to the progress attained by the Christian races does not apply to them. It is the lot of the Greeks, the Armenians and others.

Amongst the Bulgars one reckons fifty out of one hundred labourers and no less than forty out of one hundred shepherds, herders, hay makers and the like. As for the Muslim Bulgars, thanks to the tuition drawn from religious teaching and due to experience resulting from a long experience of government, they have acquired a more distinct development of their intellectual faculties which makes them superior to the others. The Bulgars themselves recognize this.

To wish today that those who were in charge for four centuries should be governed by those who were obedient to them yesterday, when those latter are their inferiors in their intelligence, is plainly to seek to create in the Balkan peninsula a state of affairs so that during a further generation Europe will, as a consequence, be in trouble; for the Muslim Bulgars, before leaving their country, and before giving up their property and their estate, will engage in bloody combat. This has already begun and it will continue, but, were it to be stifled, would be born again from its ashes in order to trouble Europe and Asia.

Roma (Român or Aromân). Elements of the ancient race (originally from India) found throughout the Balkans. In Bulgaria there are over half a million. Many are Muslims who resisted, as best they could, the efforts of the Bulgarian government under Todor Zhivkov (before 1989) to change their names. In Macedonia and Kosovo, an 'Egipcani' Association — stressing Egyptian origin — was set up in 1990 by Muslim Romans.

Sahatkullë (Albanian). 'Clock-tower', often built adjacent to a mosque.

Samâhane (Albanian samâh, in Arabic samâ'). Ritual music and dance performed by certain of the Sufî orders, for example, the Mevlevi (Mawlawiya). This took place in a galleried hall or high-ceilinged room, called a *samahane*, examples of which survive in Sarajevo and in Plovdiv (Bulgaria) and elsewhere.

Sandžaq (Turkish sanjaq). Originally a 'flag' or 'standard', but subsequently applied to an administrative district and to a subdivision of a vilayet in the Ottoman empire. Administered (e.g. in Bosnia) by a *Sandžaq beg*.

Šari'a (Arabic, Serbo-Croat *šerijat*). 'Canon law of Islam', though in the Balkans it has a general sense of 'religious law of the Muslims' (Albanian, *(sheriat)*, Baba Rexhebi defines it as 'Islamic legislation codified by the early *sakih* and *ulema* and specified in the Quran'. In the view of Alija Izetbegović (*The Islamic Declaration*, 1970), 'In the Koran, there are relatively few genuine "laws" but much more "faith" and demands for its practical application.' Occasionally, in the Balkans, the term is synonymous with Islam itself.

Tac or Taj (Arabic *tāj*, 'crown'). In the *Baktāshiyā* Sufi order, denotes (to quote Baba Rexhebi) 'head-cover worn by dervishes and Baba; a white cap consisting of twelve or four foldings; the twelve foldings symbolise the Twelve Imams [see above]; the number four symbolises the four gates: *shariah* [see above]), *marifah* [*ma'rifa*, 'spiritual knowledge of the mystics']), *hakikah* [*haqīqa*, 'God as the Ultimate Reality'] and *tarikah* [see below]).

Tarikat (Arabic *tarīqa*, 'way', 'path' or 'method'). Sufi order or Sufi 'way' (Albanian *rruge*), or 'Brotherhood of Dervishes' (Serbo-Croat, *derviški red*). Some orders take their name from their founders, e.g. *qādiriyya* (*Kadirija*) from 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jilāni, while others, e.g. *Malāmatiyya* or *Malāmiyya*, indicate some special doctrine or intention of the order or, as in the case of the *Khalwatiyya* (*halvetija*), central importance is given to the regular practice of a retreat.

Tekke (Arabic *takiyya*, pl. *takāya*). Usually called a *tekije* in the Balkans, though other terms of similar designation, derived from Persian and Turkish, such as *hanikah* and *zavija* (see below), are also used. A lodge of a Sufi order which is inhabited by a *Cheikh* or *Baba* and by dervishes, who, in the case of the *Baktāshiyā*, were predominantly celibate (*myxheret*).

Timar (Turkish). Originally a landed estate which yielded less than 20,000 pieces of silver annually. Administered in the Balkans by the *timar-defterdar*.

Türbe (Turkish, from Arabic *turba*). Mausoleum, or elaborately canopied grave, often of a notable Ottoman official or a Sufi *Shaykh*; regarded as the tomb of a saint. They are visited on occasions, prayers are said, offerings are made and cures are effected. A locality called by this name is situated to the west of Travnik in Bosnia. Frequently a *türbe* is located to one side of a mosque founded by the occupant.

Vlachs. With the Greeks, one of the most ancient Balkan peoples, claiming descent from the original Thracians. Today they live in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia (Bitola, Resen, Kruševo) and Serbia, and they extend inland in East-Central Europe as far as Slovakia. They speak a form of Romanian, and, unlike the Roma, are almost entirely Eastern Orthodox in religion; a few are Uniates. Once many were nomadic pastoralists, but they are now either farmers or have migrated to towns. Small colonies of Vlachs were once found in the Middle East, but these have now been Arabised and absorbed. Recent research by Dr Marian Wenzel suggests that some of the

famous tomb monuments (*stečak*, pl. *stečci*) in Bosnia and Hercegovina, usually described as 'Bogomil', may have been carved by Vlachs.

Vakuf (Arabic *waqf*). 'Pious bequest', described by N.J. Coulson (*A History of Islamic Law*, Edinburgh, 1964) as 'a settlement of a property under which ownership of the property is "immobilised" and the usufruct thereof is devoted to a purpose which is deemed charitable by the law'. This may apply to land, property (in the form of buildings) or sums of money. In the Balkans, *vakuf* may mean the property of a Muslim community and include socially beneficial property of various kinds. Whole towns and villages in Bosnia and Hercegovina, such as Gorni Vakuf, Donji Vakuf and Skender Vakuf, have perpetuated the name of such an endowment. Poems have been written in honour of those who made the bequest. A *vakufnama* is an endowment (*zakladnica*), and the founder or donor of the bequest (*zakladnik*) is termed a *vakif*.

Wahdat-i-wujud (Arabic *wahdat al-wujūd*). 'Oneness of Being', an extremely important Islamic belief in the Balkans as elsewhere. Often dismissed as 'pantheism', it reflects concepts that cannot be so easily defined. According to Taufic Ibrahim and Arthur Sagadeev, in their *Classical Islamic Philosophy* (transl. H. Campbell Creighton, Moscow, 1990, p. 309)

The philosophy of the Wujudists is above all one of absolute monism. The keystone of their structures is the doctrine of unity, of the absolute unity (*wahda mutlaqa*) of everything that exists. Behind any plurality they saw the unity encompassing it; they saw in anything a manifestation of the One that linked it with other things, forming them into an organic whole. All being was one, Ibn 'Arabi wrote, and there was nothing in the world except the supreme One (*wahdat al-wahdat*) or the One that was manifested in the many, the 'One-many' (*al-wahid al-kathir*).

The monistic intention of Sufism is clearly conveyed by the verses of Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi, which Hegel cited as a model of the contemplation of the One characteristic of the pantheisms of the Muslim East 'in His finest purity and sublimity':

*I saw but One through all heaven's starry spaces gleaming:
I saw but One in all sea billows wildly streaming.
I looked into the heart, a waste of worlds, a sea –
I saw a thousand dreams, yet One amid all dreaming,
And earth, air, water, fire when thy decree is given.
There is no living heart but beats unfailingly
In the one song of praise to thee, from earth and heaven.*

Zavija (Arabic *zāwiya*). 'Corner' and 'establishment of a religious order'. Nathalie Clayer, *L'Albanie pays des derviches*, p. 488, explains: 'In the Balkans, "zawiya" is employed to indicate a place utilised as a tekke, but which is not a true tekke, such as a room in a private dwelling or a mosque

(whereas in the Arab world this term is equivalent to *tekke* in the Turkish world).'

Zikr (Arabic, *dhikr*). 'Invocation' and 'evocation'; in Sufi terms, *Dhikr Allāh*, 'invocation of God'. This is common to all Sufi orders, namely a repeated calling on the name of God during séances and gatherings held by the different Sufi orders (both men and women separately). In Albanian, *dhikët* or *ziqërt* (*permendje e Zotit, lutje e përbashkët e dervishëve*), namely 'mention of God, prayerful petition jointly attended and carried out by dervishes'. According to Baba Rexhebi, 'The repeating of the names of God: the invocation may be silent, *suqut*, or vociferous.'

Zot. One of the most commonly used names of God among Albanians (appearing, for example, in Naim's verse), although *All-ahut* is also found (also *Përend*). Hence, 'In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful' (Arabic, *Bi-smillāh al-Rāhman al-Rāhīm*) is rendered in Albanian either by 'Me emërin e Zotit Bamirës, Mëshinues' or 'Në emër të All-ahut te gjithmeshirshmit Mëshirëplotis'.

INTRODUCTION

This book began as a study of the relationship between the Arabs and those sundry peoples that inhabited Europe to the north of the Black Sea. Circumstances were to prevent the publication of such a wide study. The field of interest soon appeared to be over-ambitious. By then, it had become narrow and focused upon the Balkans, and upon Albania in particular. The stimulus that was provided by such works as F.W. Hasluck's *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans* (Oxford, 1929), and Alexandre Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush's *Mystics and Commissars: Sufism in the Soviet Union* (London: Hurst 1985) may be detected in the pages that follow. Travel in the Balkans was also a spur. The thrill of entering unknown territory as one carried one's luggage through the wild no-man's-land between Yugoslavia, as it then was, and the atheist PSR of Albania at Hani Hoti in the days that followed the death of Enver Hoxha was a memorable experience. Subsequent visits to Macedonia, Romanian Dobrudja and Bulgaria stimulated and sharpened an interest in these Muslim peoples, which has in no way diminished over the years. Even during visits to North Africa it was an extra pleasure to meet representatives of the dwindling Balkan communities that survive in Algiers and elsewhere.

Apart from the valuable essays brought together in the publication *Islam in the Balkans* (papers arising from a symposium held to celebrate the World of Islam Festival at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, 18–30 July 1976, published in 1979), there are few current works in English that aim at being a general introduction to the subject. It should be said at the outset that in my book it is principally the selected list of books and journals in the bibliography and the notes accompanying each chapter that provide such an introduction. Some of the references cited are in Balkan publications. I have however found that it is quite possible to obtain xeroxed copies of many of these publications through inter-library loan arrangements and the facilities afforded by good lending libraries in Britain. Some other publications are in Arabic and Persian. Their inclusion is deliberate. There is much ignorance of Balkan Islam among many Muslim readers in the Arab world, Africa, Pakistan and South-East Asia. As many of these Muslims have a reading knowledge of Arabic, it seemed reasonable to include these references together with those in West European languages.

Islam in the Balkans is often viewed as suffering from a kind of

terminal ailment, deprived of almost all means of self-renewal, with nothing to contribute to the reform and revivification of world Islam as a whole, and dependent on funding from the heartland of the Arab East. Professor W. Montgomery Watt wrote in his book *What is Islam?* (Longman/Librairie du Liban, 1968), p. 142:

There are also three and a half million Muslims in Europe [sic] (other than Turkey), chiefly in Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria; but this is a part of the periphery where Islam has been on the defensive, and indeed in retreat, for centuries. These European Muslims are unlikely to make any great contribution to the general life of Islam in the visible future, but influences from other parts of the Islamic world might some day lead to revival and renewal among them.

It is a fact that for centuries there has been quiet and continuous contact between Balkan Muslims and the Islamic Middle East, besides Turkey, either individually or through the Balkan families that established homes in Egypt, Syria and North Africa.

Historical and religious studies (I exclude anthropological ones) devoted to the Muslim peoples of the Balkans (especially Albania, Bosnia and the Turks in Bulgaria) may be divided broadly into two angles of vision. The first regards Islam in the Balkans as a branch of Ottoman studies, and the region as one formerly part of the 'Ottoman East' (the 'Near East', as it was often called in an older distribution of the 'East' as viewed from Western Europe; D.G. Hogarth wrote that 'the East' denoted 'some regions also of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe'). This view is admirable and eminently sound if one considers the overwhelming impact that the Ottomans indeed made on every aspect of life (for example architecture of all kinds) in this part of Europe. In the weighty articles and books by writers such as Hasan Kaleši, Alexandre Popović, Peter Sugar and Machiel Kiel, the Balkan lands tend to be seen as part of 'European Turkey'. Their views are sustained by archival documentation, numerous linguistic borrowings and the styles of both religious and secular architecture. There is a very formidable case, even though it does not explain the whole story.

The second point of view is that of a quite independent 'European Islam'. A distinguished writer on the cultural achievements of the Bosnian and Hercegovinan Muslims who sees it in this light is Smail Balić, together with several other contributors to articles published in the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. The 'Islamisation of the Balkans', in their view, is not merely to be equated with 'Ottomanisation'. The gateways are many and the people diverse, and the genius of Islam is to be perceived at its deepest in the character of the Balkan peoples themselves.

Islam reflects their own identity just as hitherto Oriental Christianity has become acclimatised among the Illyrians and the Slavs.

These two views are not mutually exclusive. They are a matter of relative weight and balance. I admit that my approach is sympathetic to the latter, and this is one of the themes that run through the seven interrelated chapters of this book. Those links are emphasised that have brought together the Balkan Muslim peoples and the Arab world in particular. Nevertheless, I do not share all the premises of those who advocate a 'European Islam'. That cause, seems at times to be almost an *apologia* not backed by adequate proof. Sometimes its advocates seem to be trying too obviously to show, or prove, that Islam is not a 'heat-belt religion'. It is capable, in the Balkans, as it was in the ex-USSR via the Caucasus or the Volga, of being propagated among European peoples, however one happens to define 'European'.

A scholar such as Francis Robinson in his *Atlas of the Islamic World since 1500* (Oxford, 1982, p. 176: 'Islam in the West') remarks: 'The map illustrates, as far as can be accurately ascertained, the Muslim populations of European societies and the main places from which they came. The Muslims of the Balkans are long established.' However, what it is that unites, say, a Bosnian Muslim in Sarajevo, a convert in Bradford, a Maghribī settled in Marseille and a Tatar in Helsinki is nowhere properly explained other than by the fact that the dictate of geography determines that they share an abode in a locality on a specific continent that is marked in a particular colour on the pages of an atlas. In many ways the thoughtful and moving article by Michael Ignatieff, 'Stones of Sarajevo put us to shame' (the *Observer*, 17 May 1992, p. 19), answers that question.

'Balkan Islam' has come about because it is a part of the European continent that is a cultural bridge and has a coastline (and to a degree an interior) adjacent to and opposite the great heartland of Islam in North Africa and the Middle East. In the same way that al-Andalus, parts of Italy, Sicily, the Balearics, Crete and Cyprus became, for a while at least, important cultural centres of the medieval world of Islam, so it was destined that at least some parts of the Balkans would become directly or indirectly a mission field, a 'tide-mark', for the Islamic faith. It was to gain a tiny following in that peninsula before the arrival of the Ottomans in the fourteenth century, just as it has obviously survived the Turks' departure. Seeds of Islam were nurtured in Mamlūk Egypt and Syria before they were transferred to fertile soil in parts of the Balkans; so too other cultural elements were transplanted via Hungary

or came direct from the steppes and river systems of Eastern Europe and from Central Asia. Slavs who had once been settled on Byzantium's Syrian frontiers were to be influenced by the manners, customs and folk-epics of the Persians, the Arabs and other Muslim enemies. Albanians and Bosnians who served as Janissaries in the Maghrib or Mashriq were exposed to various Islamic influences. Their relationship with the Arabs sometimes had a detached relationship to life in the Ottoman heartland in Asia Minor or west of the Bosphorus.

A brief word may be added about the frequent invocation of 'syncretism' and 'heterodoxy' in these pages. To many a pious Muslim in the Middle East (Sunni Albanian-Arabs among them) such a term may cause distress. It is equated with unorthodoxy, heresy and beliefs gauche or queer. This is an outsider's subjective view. Furthermore, the heterodox in the Balkans have much in common with the Middle East, where Druze, Nuşayrī Ismā‘īlī and Kızılbaş display some kindred beliefs. There are numerous Balkan Muslims, especially in Bosnia, who are orthodox Sunnite to the core, sober and God-fearing, lofty in ethic, loyal servants of the Prophet. Where Sufism is to be found among them, it is a personal matter and tends to be scholarly. To this may be added a further point. The 'heterodox' do not at all view themselves as such. *Baktashī Babās* and the like regard themselves as no less 'orthodox' than their peers (as one may see from extracts from the writings of Baba Rexhebi and Shaykh Ahmad Sirrī Babā in this book). Some even maintain that their daring and questioning Islamic ideal is a fulfilment of the Qur'anic message, and in particular even a refinement of the teachings of Sufism.

Be this as it may, it will also be observed that in the past there was a difference between Slav Islam, as practised in Bosnia, and much nominal Islam as practised amongst the Albanians. Believers may be shocked to read this description by M. Edith Durham, in her book *High Albania*, published in London in 1909, p. 313:

The ground fact is this. The North Albanian tribesman is an Albanian first. He has never absorbed the higher teaching of either Christianity or Islam (I speak of the masses only). Christ and Mohammed are to him two supernatural 'magic dickies,' each able, if propitiated, to work wonders. Looked at, impartially, through the eyes of a tribesman, which has succeeded better? As a Christian, the tribesman was trampled by that hated unbeliever, the Slav (he has never called the Slav a Christian). With the help of Islam, on the contrary, the Slav has been beaten back. The Albanian has regained much territory. But for foreign intervention, he would have regained much more. The magic of Mohammed has given him fat lands, ruling posts in the Government, has not

exacted compulsory military service, has paid him well when he chose to fight, and has never troubled to teach him Mohammedanism properly, but has left him free to keep his old customs.

He does not veil his women, nor seclude them more than do many Christians, and rarely has more than one wife, save a sister-in-law. He pays no more attention to his Hodja than to his priest. Except at a mosque, I have never seen him perform either the proper prayers or ablutions. If he be an earnest believer, he belongs to some Dervish sect — preferably the Bektashes — which love the Orthodox Mohammedans as do the Dissenters the Church of England. Briefly, he has had all the advantages of Islam, and gone his own way. As a counter-attraction, Christianity offers him the position of underdog, problematic advantages in another world, and, mark this, probable foreign domination in this one.

Can Muslim Albanians (their faith eroded by years of Marxism) be judged benighted in having such an earthbound view? Is Islam, or indeed Christianity, primarily a portfolio of investments to secure unending bliss in the world to come (*al-ākhira*)? On this criterion alone, are the Balkan Muslims given a low rating for piety, commitment to their faith or a show of sincerity in their confession? Has the Westerner ever truly understood the real Albanian Islam? In the past, Sunnite orthodoxy has been disparaged by Westerners. The gnosticism of the *Baktāshiyya* has been viewed with a sympathy beyond its deserts, possibly because its creed has been seen as a ‘half-way house to Christianity’. All these are valid questions, and it is hoped that in these pages Islam in the Balkans (not simply because of its topicality) may enjoy a far higher regard, and that those who profess the faith there and indeed who are dying for it may receive much more support from Arab and non-Arab fellow-believers.

The feeling of neglect among Yugoslav Muslims, in particular the Bosnians, is stressed by the Arab journalist Munīr Naṣīf:¹

But they scold their Arab Muslim brethren. How often have we heard cross words of complaint, that Muslim brethren in the Arab and non-Arab countries do not know much at all about the Muslims of Yugoslavia. The University [of Belgrade] is desirous of being supplied with books, with sources and with cultural and literary journals and Arabic newspapers. A Muslim Yugoslav student, who was studying Arabic language and literature, said to us, ‘Isn’t it strange that Arabic books and newspapers reach Athens, capital of Greece, and

¹ In his article ‘Arabo-Muslim Civilisation in Yugoslavia’, *al’Arabi*, Kuwait 233, 1978, p. 75.

stop there. The distance by air between Athens and Belgrade is no more than half an hour.'

The journalist was not surprised by the student's remarks since during his visit to Belgrade and Sarajevo, which lasted a fortnight, no Arabic newspaper could be purchased. Arab students studying in Yugoslavia had complained to their ambassadors, who had promised to help, but so far nothing had been achieved.

Muslims in Britain in their unstinting support for victims of the tragedy of Bosnia have shown what should be done by way of sympathy, aid relief and understanding. Believers and unbelievers alike should have more thought for the faith and the culture that has made its individual and fascinating contribution to the life of South-Eastern Europe.

Note on the use of certain ethnic, geographical and historical terms in this volume, in the light of the current situation in the Balkans and especially in Bosnia-Hercegovina

The origin of the Bosnian Muslims. This subject is still a controversial one. The historical facts are unclear and are open to wide differences in interpretation. The simple equation 'ex-Bogomils' equals 'Muslims' is a gross over-simplification and unlikely to be correct. According to Ivo Andrić in *The Developement of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule*:²

The situation in Bosnia was all the more awkward on account of the frightful religious struggle that was raging within the country. As mentioned, this struggle had reached a critical point just before the invasion when some resolution was unavoidable, whatever the direction taken. Bosnia might have turned entirely to the Catholic West and participated to the fullest in its spiritual life. (The fact that two of the last Bosnian kings openly leaned towards Catholicism, followed by a respectable number of the nobility, makes this the most likely possibility.) Or on the other hand, less plausible, a kind of minor scale Slavic Reformation in Bosnia's spiritual life would have been brought about by a victory of the Patarins.

At the decisive moment this far-reaching process was abruptly broken by the sudden intrusion of a conquering people foreign in faith, spirit and race. The confusion was compounded when the upper, better-off part of the population, in order to save its possessions, adopted the religion of these intruders. So it

2. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990, pp. 16-17.

and about that down the middle of the South Slavic lands a line was etched, more generally following the Danube, Sava and Una rivers and the Dinaric Alps if we disregard strong fluctuations. This dividing wall split in two the Serbo-Croatian racial and linguistic complex, and its shadow, where four centuries of ghastly history were played out, was to lie heavy on the landscape to either side into the far distant future.

Therein we see the whole meaning of Turkish rule and Turkish influence on Bosnia's spiritual life.

By right of geographic position Bosnia should have linked the lands along the Danube with the Adriatic Sea, two peripheries of the Serbo-Croatian element and two different zones of European culture. Having fallen to Islam, it was in no position to fulfill this, its natural role, and to take part in the cultural development of Christian Europe, to which ethnographically and geographically it belonged.

Far more succinctly, Alexander Lopatić remarks:³

A special case of peaceful conversion to Islam is Bosnia where, shortly after the conquest in 1463, a considerable number of Christian inhabitants, peasants and lesser nobility adopted Islam. Many of them belonged to a Christian sect called the Bogomils, who, after being expelled from Serbia, Bulgaria and other Balkan countries, settled down in Bosnia where they formed a kind of national church. The Bosnian kingdom was troubled by both Hungary and Rome, and as a result of this the Bogomils' religion became an expression of Bosnian independence and national identity. It received support even from the court which was initially Catholic. After the Ottoman conquest many Bogomils accepted Islam at least formally since it did not make too high demands on them. On the other hand it secured them a future in the new political situation.

Muslim nationality in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In my final chapter I make reference to the muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina (and to a lesser degree elsewhere) as being *sui generis* within the Islamic *Umma*. In no way is this pejorative. The whole question has been examined in great detail, and thoroughly documented, by Sabrina P. Ramet, who remarks:⁴

Today in Bosnia-Herzegovina, there are Muslims who consider themselves primarily 'Muslim Croats', those who consider themselves 'Bosnian Muslims'

³ 'Islamisation of the Balkans: Some general considerations', *Islam in the Balkans*, Edinburgh, 1979, p. 50.

⁴ 'Primordial ethnicity or modern nationalism: The case of Yugoslavia's Muslims reconsidered', *South Slav Journal*, vol. 13, nos 1-2 (47-48), p. 15.

(i.e. 'Muslims in the ethnic sense'), and those who, in the spirit of the 'Islamic Declaration', see themselves simply as 'Muslims'. In addition, there are those Muslims who in the 1981 census declared themselves 'Yugoslavs'. This already complex picture is made more so by the presence of persons like Fuad Muhić, who describe themselves as 'atheist Muslims', and who therefore completely divorce religion from nationality.

Current events are certainly changing this situation completely, including the question of Bosnian (*Bosanski*) identity. There is no intention here to predict the future outcome.

Yugoslavia (Jugoslavia). Throughout this book I have used the former name of the entire Republic to express a geographical region (in the same way as 'Indian sub-continent' is currently in use), without any intention of a political connotation.

Kosovo and Kosova. The former is the Serbian spelling, the latter that of the Albanian Kosovars, used also in Albania itself. I have retained the form of Kosovo since it is the most commonly used spelling in Anglo-Saxon countries; it is also the spelling used by Isa Zymberi in his Preface to *Colloquial Albanian* (Routledge, 1991), himself a Kosovar, and avoids the current Albanian spelling of Kosovë (as used by Ramadan Marmullaku in his *Albania and the Albanians*).

Macedonia. Unless Greece or Bulgaria is specifically indicated, Macedonia denotes the republic of that name in former Yugoslavia.

The future of the Muslim communities in the Balkans. In the concluding chapter an attempt is made to see what lies ahead for these small and predominantly minority communities. A future where Islam and Christianity will to some extent overlap seems very likely in Albania where religious friction is rarely found in popular practice or in Albanian thought. Whether Sufism will be revived is harder to predict. In Bulgaria, among both Turks and Pomaks, mosques are being restored and rebuilt, and increasing support, especially financial, is being sought from Turkey and Saudi Arabia in order to build *madrasas* and finance training courses for *imāms*, who are exceedingly few. Arabic is hardly understood and the Qur'an is a closed book unless a Turkish translation is used. The size, the territory and the character of the Bosnian Muslim community in the future cannot be predicted. Many of the refugees and

displaced persons will never return to their homes — villages and towns which have been erased from the Balkan map. Instead we are likely to see the establishment and growth of small or even sizeable Muslim communities in parts of Croatia, Slovenia and Hungary, where Muslims have been few in number since Ottoman times. The Zagreb mosque has become increasingly central for Bosnian Muslim relief and religious activities.

1

THE ARABS, THE SLAVS, THE HUNGARIAN SARACENS AND THE ARNAUTS

'In the city of Aleppo, I met a large number of persons called Bashkīrs, with reddish hair and reddish faces. They were studying law according to the school of Abū Ḥanīfah (may God be well pleased with!) I asked one of them who seemed to be an intelligent fellow for information concerning their country and their condition. He told me, "Our country is situated on the other side of Constantinople, in a kingdom of a people of the Franks called the Hungarians.

"We are Muslims, subjects of their king, and live on the border of his territory, occupying about thirty villages, which are almost like small towns. But the king of the Hungarians does not allow us to build walls around any of them, lest we should revolt against him. We are situated in the midst of Christian countries, having the land of the Slavs on the north, on the south, that of the Pope, i.e. Rome (now the Pope is the head of the Franks, the vicar of the Messiah in their eyes, like the commander of the faithful in the eyes of the Muslims; his authority extends over all matters connected with religion among the whole of them); on the west, Andalusia; on the east, the land of the Greeks, Constantinople and its provinces." He added, "Our language is the language of the Franks, we dress after their fashion, we serve with them in the army, and we join them in attacking all their enemies, because they only go to war with the enemies of Islam.' I then asked him how it was they had adopted Islam in spite of their dwelling in the midst of the unbelievers. He answered, 'I have heard several of our fore-fathers say that a long time ago seven Muslims came from Bulgaria and settled among us. In kindly fashion they pointed out to us our errors and directed us into the right way, the faith of Islam. Then God guided us and (praise be to God!) we all became Muslims and God opened our hearts to the faith. We have come to this country to study law; when we return to our own land, the people will do us honour and put us in charge of their religious affairs.'" (Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, translated by Sir T.W. Arnold:

The Preaching of Islam, London, 1935, pp. 193-4)

The Arabs enter Balkan history

Francis Dvornik¹ maintained that the establishment of the Slavs as conquerors in Southern Europe was not simply an event of major impor-

1. In *The Slavs, Their Early History and Civilization*, Boston, 1956, p. 42.

tance for the evolution of Europe, but also an event of significance for the history of humanity. In his opinion, the destruction of Christianity within the extensive region of the Roman empire then called Illyricum, which today we know as Albania and a large part of ex-Yugoslavia, had another important consequence. The region hitherto had come within the jurisdiction of the Roman see. Thessalonica's metropolitan was appointed as a special apostolic vicar for Illyricum. Latin- and Greek-speaking populations intermingled, living in peace with each other, and the Balkan peninsula formed a bridge, economically knit together by that great highway the Via Egnatia, joining the Latin West to the Greek East.

Christian Illyricum's civilisation was to be destroyed by the Avars and the Slavs. This destruction and this severance were eventually to be compounded by the late medieval expansion of Islam as a world religion. However, the main development was to take place in the future, although Islamisation began earlier than is sometimes supposed. Balkan Islam was a force that eroded Christianity, aggravating further the fragmentation of Western and Eastern Europe. At the same time it provided a channel for the westward diffusion of Oriental culture and commerce.

It was also the view of Dvornik that the Western and the Eastern Balkans might have remained in constant touch and that their evolution could not have taken the contrary direction that it took during the Middle Ages and later. The Avars and the Slavs were the most decisive of the invaders. The Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610–41) sought for help among the Serbs in order to fight the Avars. Furthermore, he appears to have sent an embassy to the Croats, offering them a new homeland in Illyricum after they had expelled the Avars. The Croats sent a body of troops to Byzantine territory. There, in league with the Lombard army and with the support of the Byzantine navy, they began operations against the Avars. First Dalmatia, then the remainder of Illyria and finally the territory between the Drava and Sava rivers were liberated.

Both Croats and Serbs were settled by Heraclius in the lands liberated from the Avars, and assumed the leadership of the other Slavic tribes which had been inhabitants of much of Yugoslavia from the end of the 6th century. Heraclius continued to claim overlordship of the territory and, according to the Byzantine imperial writer Constantine Porphyrogenitus, he asked Pope Honorius to send missionaries to the Croats and the Serbs. To these, even at this early date, the growing

impact of the Arabs in Asia Minor may be added. Arab control of much of the Mediterranean made contact between East and West more difficult across this vital Balkan peninsula.

Unquestionably the 'Slavs', however loosely this term was conceived, made an impression upon the Arabs. To cite a description of them by Ibrāhīm b. Ya'qūb (as quoted by Abū 'Ubayd al-Bakrī, died 487/1094):²

Constantinople is sited to the south of Bulgaria. The Pechenegs (*al-Bājānakiyya*) are neighbours of the Bulgarians to the east and to the north. To the west of Constantinople is [situated] the Venetian Gulf. It issues from the Syrian sea between the great land [mass of Europe] and Constantinople. The great land mass is encompassed by the littorals of Rome, and those of Lombardy, and it terminates, decisively, at Aquileia [in the north-eastern Adriatic]. All these places become as one peninsula, being surrounded by the Syrian sea in the south and by the arm of Venice in the east and in the north. An opening from the western side of the peninsula remains.

Both sides of this Venetian Gulf [northwards], from its exit in the east from the Syrian sea, are inhabited by the *Saqalīha*. To the east of them are the Bulgarians, and to the west of them there are 'Slavs' who are other than them. Those who dwell in the western part of the Venetian Gulf are of a greater courage and of a doughtier metal. The people of that region seek for their protection and guard against their violence. Their land is lofty in height and is mountainous. It is one where routes are rough and are difficult to traverse. Generally, the *Saqalīb* [sic] are violent and aggressive. Were it not for the diversity in the branches of their stock, and the numerousness of the subdivisions of their clans, no nation would stand up to them in toughness and in vehemence.³

The first contacts between the Arabs and the Slavs are best seen as a tripartite interrelationship between the Byzantine Emperors who reigned

2. See Abdurrahman Ali El-Hajj, *The Geography of al-Andalus and Europe*, from the book of 'al-Masālik wal Manālik'. (*Jughrafiyat al-Andalus wa-Urihā*), Beirut: Dār al-Irshād, 1387/1968, pp. 179–81.

3. Although the Arabs in a later age (as is shown in Chapter 4) created fantasies, including genealogies and fictitious migrations, all of which linked the Albamans and some Slavs with themselves, they seem to have been unaware of the ancient ties of the Maure Vlachs with Moors who were settled by the Romans in the Danube region and in adjacent provinces which included Moesia (modern Serbia), Dacia, Bessarabia, and Illyria. See D. Mandić, *Početak Vlaha prema novim popunšum izrazu anjma* (the origin of the Vlachs in the light of new historical research), Buenos Aires, 1956. Mandić has carried out much further research since and the reader is referred to *Croatia, Land, People, Culture*, vol. II, University of Toronto Press, 1970, pp. 383–5, and his footnotes wherein early sources are cited.

during the seventh and the ninth centuries, the Slavs who bordered Byzantine territory in Thrace, and the Arabs who pushed north through Asia Minor towards the Caucasus and Byzantium, or alternatively, by sea along the southern coast of Asia Minor, the Aegean, the entrance of the Bosphorus and, along the coast of the Adriatic in both southern Italy and Dalmatia.

The Byzantine emperors were faced with a challenge on two fronts, the threat of Slav encroachment to the north and west and the problem of the Arab and Muslim advance. Constans II (641–68), when he failed to stem the Arab onward march in Asia Minor, turned his attention westwards. The Imperial armies moved against the Slavs. He used them afterwards as an emigrant population in Asia Minor both to serve his purposes as farmers and to curb and control them. It is no surprise therefore that when ‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Khālid led his raid in 664 he should have come face to face with ‘Slavs’.

Under Justinian II some 30,000 Slavs, many now armed, were settled in the Theme of Opsikion (especially Bithynia) in western Asia Minor. According to Michael, the Syrian, about 7,000 of these Slavs deserted to the Arabs in 692/3. Many of them were to be incorporated within the Arab forces.

In the reign of Constantine V, the number of transplanted Slavs is reckoned to have totalled 208,000. In the campaign of 716–8 the Arabs seized an entire fortress or town of Slavs, (*madīnat al-Saqālibā*). It was sited at Loulon, a key fortress on the eastern border of the Empire, though E.W. Brooks¹ believes that this fortress could have been situated nearer to Constantinople.

The presence of Slavs in the path of the Arabs and the subsequent desertion of many to their cause, and to Islam, was an important factor in developing a relationship between the Arabs and the southern ‘Slavs’ peoples. Graebner notes: ‘Thus, in little over a century (657–762) close to a quarter of a million Slavs were settled in Asia Minor, the heartland of the empire. This Slavic immigration represents the largest series of population transfers in Byzantium’s history.’² He further

¹ E.W. Brooks, ‘The Arabs in Asia Minor (641–750), from Arabic Sources’, *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 18 (1898), p. 194, fn. 6. However, T. Lewicki, in his ‘Un dévouement arabe inconnu sur les Slavs de l’an 720’, *Folia Orientalia*, vol. IV, Krakow, 1968, p. 3321, suggests either Asia or Thrace.

² Michael Graebner, ‘The Slavs in Byzantine population transfers of the seventh and eighth centuries’, *Etudes Balkaniques*, no. 1, Sofia, 1975, p. 43.

adds: 'Although bribery and promises played a part, once the Slavs were on the Arab side they remained there.'

Dvornik maintained that the Byzantines were forced by the Persians and the Arabs to look increasingly towards the East when danger threatened. Having lost almost all the European provinces, they were forced to increase their reliance upon the eastern provinces, especially upon those in Asia Minor. A gradual 'Orientalisation' of the Empire and the Church was its natural consequence. Hence Illyricum, 'instead of being a bridge between West and East, contributed most to the estrangement of the two Churches. It finally became the battlefield on which the two forms of Christianity waged the first great struggle which led to that complete separation so fateful for the whole of Christendom.'⁶

Illyricum (Albania and Yugoslavia) was destined later to become a Balkanic 'drawbridge' between West and East, between Christendom and *Dār al-Islām*. Yet what is perceived as such a bridge may, instead, be viewed as troubled border marches of an alien extra-European intrusion. This latter view is not uncommon among non-Muslim Balkan peoples. No less a figure than the world-famous Yugoslav writer Ivo Andrić, in his doctoral thesis, remarks: 'The part of Bosnia's population assimilating to Islam whic!. constituted a dominant warrior cast throughout Turkish rule, first directed its energies to conquest and then to the defence of property. This was a caste whose spiritual and intellectual life grew petrified in the twin moulds of a foreign religion and an alien language.'

Middle Eastern beliefs among the Slavs

At the beginning of the Christian era, Slav tribes occupied a region that extended from the Baltic to the Carpathians, and from the Elbe to the Black Sea. To this latter may be appended the Balkan peninsula itself. Both the Black Sea region and the Balkans exerted a strong pull upon these Slavs. The climate was drier and warmer, and the trade routes of the Roman East and the Persian Empire were a magnet that drew them to the South. About 200 AD they replaced Sarmatians in South Russia. Later they expanded deeper into Europe, and by the third century they had reached the northern bank of the Danube. In this process they had

6. F. Dvornik, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

7. Ivo Andrić, *The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990, p. 67.

been compelled to contend with two other invaders, the Huns and the Antes — the latter appear to have been Slavs under Sarmatian leadership. Once the Huns had disappeared, the Antes extended their territory towards the lower Danube. Two other tribes, who may also have been of Sarmatian origin, or whose leadership may have been Sarmatian, achieved a prominent position. They were the Croats and the Serbs. These had originally settled in the northern region of the Caucasus and were all but free of Slav elements. Nonetheless, in their flight from the Huns, they migrated beyond the middle Dnieper and were joined by a tribe of Goths. In this northerly region they formed a kind of state, owing to themselves the Slav tribes of Galacia, Silesia and eastern Bohemia. This state is mentioned by King Alfred in his Anglo-Saxon translation of Orosius' *History of the World*, and by Constantine Porphyrogenitus. It is also mentioned by the early Arabic sources, notably by al-Mas'ūdī (943):

The Slavonic tribes living in the middle and upper reaches of the Laba river, in the upper reaches of the Vistula river, and in the basin of the middle Danube [among other S(A)RBIN — the Serbs of Lusatia or Lusitians, M(O)RĀWA Moravians, H(O)RVĀTĪN — White Croats].⁸

In several areas, the Serbs and the Croats were intermixed, especially in the region of the Upper Vistula. 'White Serbia' was geographically situated between the Elbe and the Saale rivers.

When the Goths departed from Central Europe, the Slavs who were in search of land, moved in a southern and in a south-westerly direction. They attained the middle reaches of the Danube, crossed it in 517, and appeared in large areas within the Balkan peninsula. They raided Dardania, Macedonia, Epirus and as far-away a region as Thessaly. The Byzantines deemed them savages.

The Slavs had their own material culture and their own beliefs that

⁸ Cited in Tadeusz Lewicki, 'al-Mas'ūdī on the Slavs' in *al-Mas'ūdī-Millenary Commemoration Volume*, Aligarh University, 1960, p. 12. According to Stanko Guldescu: There are Arabic sources, the compte-rendus of Ibn Rusta and of Kardisi or Gardizi [1048–52] on the Slavs, which refer to the Galician Croats. The first part of the accounts of these Arabs was probably written between 842 and 847. It is an interpolation of the original, added during the last twenty years of the century, that mention is made of the Croats of little Poland or Galicia and of their powerful prince, Svetopouk or Svetopolk (Sviat-Malik). . . . The tenth century Arab geographer, Al-Masudi, also uses the name 'Charvats' to designate a military tribe and its prince Avandza, who fought against the Greeks, Franks and Lombards. If he was a Croatian ruler, this mysterious Avandza has still to be identified.'

were to have a marked influence on Christianity and, later, popular Islam, when both these faiths were to compete dramatically to change their lives. They were organised into family groups and formed village communities, although only the South Slavs were to know a loose confederation of such communities. Slav social life was either pastoral or agricultural and their religion was centred on nature and the cycle of the seasons, especially the harvest. Some of their gods however were independent of these seasonal preoccupations. They show some relationship to ancient Iranian or Indian deities, especially those to do with the sun. Key words such as 'god', 'paradise' and 'holy' illustrate these Asian connections and influences.⁹

According to Matthew Spinka:

Their ancient gods were converted into Christian saints: Veles became St Blasius and continued to guard the flocks of the Christianized Slavs: Perun became Elijah and continued to drive his thunderous car over the clouds and to wield the thunderbolts of the sky; the household gods were retained as family saints, and the belief in fairies and dryads and other members of that delightful ilk persisted without any apology or camouflage. Most of the sacred days and religious customs of the Pagan Slavs were likewise retained, having been but slightly changed or adapted. Thus for instance, the worship of ancestors is still observed in the so-called 'slava' celebrations, where the Serbian peasants bring food and drink to the graves of their dead.

Kozarac, in an article about the ancient Drenica pillar in Kosovo, describes his discovery of a modern wooden pole in Lauš village. Carved of oak in 1950, it was the handiwork of a partly crippled thirty-year-old Albanian peasant who was himself part carpenter and part farmer. It was shaped in the form of a human being. During the threshing season, this pole and several others were decorated with fifteen ears and stalks of wheat. This local custom was explained away as a harmless ceremony to ensure good fortune, fertility and abundant blessing of all kinds. He

9. Simargl, a winged monster who in the mythology of the Sarmatians guarded the tree that produced the seed for every plant, appears to be derived from the Iranian Simurgh which features in Islamic mythology of the Persians and, later, of the Arabs. The goddess Mokosh is a form of the Iranian goddess Anahita. Triglav, a three-headed god, was worshipped by the Slovenian Slavs when they settled in the Julian Alps in the sixth century. The name survives today in that of Yugoslavia's highest mountain.

Also of Middle Eastern origin was the belief in a Slav god of the underworld. He supported the earth with his arms raised to a sky. A city suspended in the air by the supernatural is not unknown in Islamic romances that owe much of the substance to Iranian legends and to ancient beliefs. Slavonic idolatry took the form of wooden poles, carved in human shape, though sometimes any ornamentation was wholly symbolic.

was told it was *per bëreget* (for blessing); this latter Albanian word derived through Turkish from the Arabic '*baraka*', meaning 'grain and cereal' and, figuratively, 'prosperity and success, gain, increase and abundance'.¹⁰

A Glagolithic church document of 1452 from the Croatian-Dalmatian area states that he who bows to the sun, the moon or any created thing and prays to them commits a mortal sin. Bosnian Orthodox church documentation condemned magical practices and also condemned the following of pagan customs well into the seventeenth century. These included dancing in the square, especially a special mask-dance that was popular on the eve of the Day of the Assumption where men wore women's dresses and women mens'. Belief in the nymphs called *vilas* was also condemned.

The Bogomils were especially inclined to continue observing these customs however much they might, in theory, contradict their otherwise 'nonconformist' beliefs. In a description of Poturs (Turcised Bosnians), Paul Rycaut in the 1660s tells of them reading the Gospel in Slavonic though having an interest in learning the Qur'an. They drank wine in Ramadān but abstained from spices. They protected Christians, believed that the Prophet Muhammad was the Paraclete, abhorred images and the sign of the cross, and practised circumcision. Double-faith was in places almost a norm. The magic of both faiths worked, and occasionally Muslim mothers sought Franciscan baptism in Bosnia since baptism brought good luck, success in battle and protected against evil spirits.¹¹

But however important such survivals may have been at the popular 'pagan' level, at a higher level, especially among the proto-Bogomils, the tenth-century Bogomils of Bulgaria and Macedonia, and then those of the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries in Bosnia and Hum, it was contact with Manichaean and non-Manichaean dualists, or with Paulician 'adoptionists', that filtered and even transferred beliefs of the Christian Middle East into the Balkans. Many of the Paulicians (who were also strong in the Caucasus) were to be transferred from Eastern Anatolia to the area of Thrace, bordering Bulgaria, following their defeat at the

10. V. Kozarac, 'The Drenica Pillar', *Glasnik Muzeja Kosova i Metohije* 1 (Prishtinë, 1956) pp. 317-18.

11. See D. Lang, 'The Slavs' in *Mythology, an Illustrated Encyclopedia*, London: Orbis, 1980, pp. 972-7, and John V.A. Fine, 'The Bosnian Church, A New Interpretation' *East European Quarterly* (Columbia University Press), 1975, pp. 16-20.

hands of the Byzantine Emperor Basil I in 872. Thrace was a dumping-ground for undesirables, a melting-pot wherein Oriental peoples, some transferred there at a far earlier period, formed a significant part of the population, and they infiltrated into more westerly regions along the Via Egnatia. Foremost amongst them were Paulician and non-Paulician Armenians, whose influence was to last for centuries.¹²

From a later age, a little of this transcontinental character may be observed in Bogomilism. In the thirteenth century, from the information given by the Italian writer Rajner Sacconi, Bogomil Byzantine communities existed in Asia Minor (Philadelphia) and in Constantinople itself (*ecclesia graecorum de Constantinopoli*); at that time there was also a community in Bosnia (*ecclesia Slavoniae*). Ties were established between all of these. They were united in a single front and shared a common ideology. As organisations, these Balkan dualists led a secret life (structured within their hierarchy of 'perfect/ascetic', 'believer' and 'listener'). Only in Bosnia were the Patarine Bosnians (who in their church were spurred on by the aspirations of a feudal nobility, yet threatened from without by a Catholic Hungarian feudal nobility) able for a while to enjoy some relative liberty. When Bosnia's sovereigns, who were intent on obtaining Hungarian assistance against the Ottomans, declared the Patarin church to be a heresy and instituted measures to eradicate it, a body of the Bogomils, hating Catholicism, embraced the Muslim faith out of choice.¹³

12. On the Asian origins of this heresy, see S. Runciman, *The Medieval Manichee*, chapter 3 and *passim*. For Balkan implications, see John V A. Fine, 'The Bulgarian Bogomil Movement', *East European Quarterly*, vol. XI, pp. 385-412, and Bernard Hamilton, 'The Origins of the Dualist Church of Drugunthia', *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. 5, no. 5, pp. 115-24.

13. See Dimitar Angelov, *Les Balkans au Moyen Age, la Bulgarie des Bogomils aux Turcs*, London: Variorum Reprints, III. 'Le Mouvement Bogomile dans les pays Slaves Balkaniques et dans Byzance', 1978, pp. 607-16.

According to Runciman, 'The Arab geographers took little interest in Balkan Bulgaria; and the Arab and Armenian chroniclers only repeat, very occasionally, items that trickled through to them from the Empire: though the Armenians took a flickering and unreliable interest in the adventures of Armenian soldiers in Basil II's Bulgarian wars. Only two of the Oriental chroniclers were interested in Balkan affairs. Eutychius, the Patriarch of Alexandria, as a Christian, kept watch on events in the Imperial Court. His chronicle ends at the year 937, and he died in 940. His continuator, Yahya of Antioch, who died in 1040, is more important. When he wrote, Antioch was a Christian city under the Empire; he therefore was in touch with all the contemporary history of the Empire.'

The Arab threat to Byzantium

In 634, Constantinople was menaced by the Arabs and the Muslim armies. Byzantium faced a double threat almost alone, although at one time in 717, the Bulgarian Khan gave powerful assistance which helped to thwart a threat from the Arabs, killing 20,000 of them. This was an exception. On at least one occasion, both Arabs and Bulgarians conceived of an alliance that would serve their respective interests. In these stratagems the Arab armies already had Slav troops in their midst. By the end of the seventh century and certainly early in the eighth, the *Saqaliba*, as they came to be known in the East and in al-Andalus, formed a significant military component in the Muslim Middle East. Yazīd b. al-Muhallab, who had been imprisoned by the Caliph, 'Umar II, in 717, escaped to Baṣra and fought his former master in the battle of Babylon in 720. Yazīd rallied his forces by insulting the Caliph's forces, calling them 'non-Arabs'. Probably these contingents were recruited among the Slav colonists whose presence in the Umayyad Caliphate, and above all in Syria, in the later seventh century has been established. They were mostly men who had changed sides from among the Slav military colonies that had been organised by Byzantium in Anatolia. They had crossed over with those in the Arab ranks during 663, 665 and 690, and had installed their headquarters in northern Syria. There were also other Slav groupings that had established themselves in the Caliphate under the Umayyads. It is not unlikely that after his expedition to Constantinople in 717, Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik brought and installed some Slav groups within Syria.

The raid on Constantinople by Maslama was heavily defeated by Leo the Isaurian (717–40) who was himself of Syrian origin; he was aided by Bulgars and other Slavs. The Arab fleet was dispersed. This disaster did not leave the Arabs unaffected. It produced a major folk hero who was to enter into both Arabic and Turkish literature, Abū'l-Husain 'Abdallāh al-Battāl al-Anṭākī (d. 740). He inspired the name and the rôle of the warrior Muslim, Sayyid Ghāzī, who is believed to lie buried near Eskişehir (Seyyit Battal gāzi türbesi) in Asia Minor. A former *tekke* of the *Baktāshiyya* Ṣūfī order is still to be seen there. The model character of the Muslim martyr in *jihād* that Battāl provided was one of major importance in the popular heroic literature of Islam, Arabic and Turkish alike.

At the same time as Dalmatian Adriatic attacks, the Arabs were engaged in raids in the area of Epirus. In 805 or 807, as allies of the Slavs of the Peloponnese, they took part in the siege of Patras, which was

reportedly saved only through the intervention of Saint Andrew, the protector of the town.

In 827, the Arabs of al-Andalus chose to land in Crete and eventually to settle there. Commanded by Abū Ḥafṣ, they were able to establish a strong fortress within the island, surrounded by a moat (*khandaq*) on the site of the city of Candia. The population were reduced to the status of slaves and only one church was preserved for the use of the Christian inhabitants.

In 862, the Arabs from Crete disembarked near Mount Athos, close to the monastery of Vatopedi, and they carried its monks into slavery. The church was burnt, and the raiders returned to Crete. In a subsequent raid, the monks of Athos were themselves captured and the region was deserted. In 866, the Arabs attacked the island of Néon, near Athens, where the famous anchorite Euthyme was living together with his brethren. The latter were captured although they were released later and subsequently transferred their place of meditation to Athos itself. Despite several attempts to dislodge the Arabs from Crete, it was only retaken in 961 by the Byzantine Emperor Nicephoros Phocas¹⁴ aided, it seems, by a Russian detachment.

Arabs and Bulgarians at the beginning of the tenth century

A kind of alliance between the Bulgars who had settled in the Balkans, and the Arabs, could have mutual advantages.¹⁵ A continued campaign on the Arab front in Asia Minor forced the Byzantines to reduce their garrisons in Europe, while their Bulgarian operations were a respite for the Caliph's forces. What in theory seemed advantageous never materialised. The Bulgars were insufficiently organised to launch a strategically planned and concerted attack. However, in the tenth century such an alliance did assume a serious form. Tsar Simeon (893–927), from his capital at Preslav in eastern Bulgaria, to the west of what is today Varna, conceived a design to conquer Byzantium and to have himself crowned Tsar of Bulgaria and the Romans. In order to achieve this it was imperative to obtain a fleet that could overcome the Byzantine naval mastery of the seas surrounding the capital on the Bosphorus. He

14. V. Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Arabs (ca. 824), a Turning Point in the Struggle between Byzantium and Islam*, Athens, 1984, pp. 61, 66–7, 83–4. There is a lengthy discussion of Arab operations in the Greek islands and mainland.

15. M. Canard, 'Arabes et Bulgares au début du Xe siècle', *Byzantion*, Brussels, vol. XI, 1936, p. 213.

adopted two plans and approached two possible allies, the Fātimids in Ḥiṣpiyā and the Amīr of Tarsus. The latter plan proved abortive, and the former was countered by the skilful diplomacy of Romain Lecapene, who captured the embassy that had sailed to Africa to finalise a treaty and was on its way home. The Bulgars were held prisoner and the Arabs from North Africa were released.¹⁶ The project was exceedingly ambitious. An African fleet was to meet a Bulgarian army which was to be led by the king in person across Thrace. The spoils of Byzantium would be shared. Tsar Simeon would rule Byzantium, the African Arabs would return to the Maghrib. Al-Mas'ūdī, in his *Muṭūj al-Dhahab*, furnishes a number of details concerning Tsar Simeon's eastern contacts with the Arabs which seem to have had no greater success.¹⁷

Canard concludes:

From 927, there could be no more question of any alliance of convenience between the Arabs and the Bulgars. Simeon's successor, who married a granddaughter of Romain Lecapene, was devoted to Byzantium. From the second third of the tenth century, conforming to this new attitude of Bulgaria, numerous Bulgars engaged themselves in the service of the empire and they fought in its armies against the Arabs. They are frequently mentioned by the historians in the wars of this epoch between Byzantium and the Hamdānid, Sayf al-Dawla, as well as by the contemporary poets.¹⁸

Far earlier, the Bulgars had come under Sasanian Persian artistic influences, but it was during the reign of Tsar Simeon that some traces of Islamic artistic influence began to appear in Bulgarian illuminated manuscripts and elsewhere in Bulgar art. These artistic borrowings were apparent in both Bulgarian and Serbian liturgical gospels and continued well into the fourteenth century. André Grabar, who has studied this in detail, traces such borrowings to southern Italy and its cosmopolitan communities that were subject to Muslim influences, and to the Christian art of the Copts. To explain this influence, he suggests, one might invoke the tradition according to which Islamic missionaries were said to have diffused Arabic books in Bulgaria in the middle of the ninth century. 'But in admitting that to be so, the memory of these manuscripts, which must have been destroyed at the time of the conversion to Christianity, had no chance of being perpetuated in the

16. *ibid.*, p. 214–15.

17. *ibid.*, p. 219.

18. *ibid.*, p. 223.

ornaments of Bulgarian manuscripts.¹⁹ He prefers to trace the major influence to Byzantium and Preslav in the ninth and tenth centuries where early Muslim style and motif had exerted a powerful influence on the decorative arts.

However, other artistic influences reveal the continuous contact between the Arabs and the Slavs. They may be perceived in the music of the Eastern Church. As Egon Wellesz remarks in his *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford, 1961, p. 235):

Investigating the melodies of the Serbian Oktoechos I found that they were composed of a number of musical phrases, repeated either exactly or with slight variations. Since the melodies of the Serbian Church derived from the Syrian – introduced into the Balkan countries along the pilgrim-routes which by-passed Constantinople – the occurrence of an identical principle of composition in both Syria and Serbia was explained, a principle to which Idelsohn had first drawn attention in his study of the technique of Arabic music and which had been confirmed by Dom Jeannin and Dom Puyade in their publications on Syrian music.

After the Arabs had gained control over the greater part of Southern Italy, they launched raids on the eastern shores of the Adriatic. Arab ships appeared before Budva, Risan and Kotor. They extended their activities to the area of Ragusa (Dubrovnik), Split and Trogir. In the middle of the ninth century, the Arabs made an alliance with the Niritliyani (the Narentane tribe in the area of the Narenta valley in Hercegovina), who had not embraced Christianity, in a joint war against Venice.

The 'Slavs' (*Saqāliba*), numbers of whom had few, if any, connections with the Balkans, were to play a prominent part in the life of Islamic al-Andalus, and in Fātimid North Africa during this period and up to the eleventh century. There were *Saqāliba* among the guards of the Arab princes in Egypt. At the end of the tenth century, the 'Slav' named Raydān was appointed commander of the guards of the Caliph, al-Hākim bi-Amr Allāh. It is well known that 'Slavs' of sundry origin and background filled important posts in the state and the army during the rule of the Arabs in al-Andalus, forming the bodyguard of the Caliph in Cordova. The number of these 'Slav' guards, belonging to the Umayyad Caliphs, attained a total of 13,750 men. Among these there

19. André Grabar, 'Influences musulmanes sur la décoration des manuscrits slaves Balkaniques', *Revue des Etudes Slaves*, 1951, p. 132.

were men of letters and of culture who left a noted mark on Arabic Spain. One was al-Khādim al-Ṣaqlabī, a literary figure during the reign of Hishām II (976–1013). Another from the same period was the noted Ḥabīb al-Ṣaqlabī, who hotly defended the origins and accomplishments of those like him in his work 'Clear and victorious arguments against those who deny the excellence of the Slavs' (*Kitāb al-Istīzhār wa'l mughālaba 'alā man ankara fadā'il al-Ṣaqāliba*).²⁰ Anecdotes, histories and verse were prominent in this valuable composition. However ethnically comprehensive the Ṣaqāliba were, Croats were included among the body of the 'Slavs'.

There were contacts between the Croats along the Adriatic coast and the Arab Muslims who were centred around Lucera in southern Italy. These contacts were to continue up to and beyond the fourteenth century, when the Croatian bishop, Augustin Kozotic, came to convert them to Christianity, which he did with some success. Nonetheless, it is also certain that Croats became converted to Islam. According to Stanko Guldescu²¹, Croatian conversions to Islam, even before the fall of Bosnia and Hercegovina (Hum, as it was then known), far exceeded the Muslim proselytes who were brought into the Christian fold by Croat missionaries. The Bosnian Bogomils and Catholics were to follow a precedent that had begun at a time before the Ottoman conquest.

20. Ḥabīb's identity has given rise to some speculation. His work is lost and we have no certain idea of his ethnic background or how many 'Balkan Slavs' were included among the Ṣaqāliba. A Yugoslav Slovenian and Croatian theory, admittedly dated now, was proposed by Vladimir Mazuranić, *Südlaven im Dienste des Islams* (vol. X, to 16th century) Zagreb and Leipzig, 1928. Further comment is furnished by Dr Jury Andrássy, *Tragom Vladimira Mazuramica*, Zagreb, 1927. Such views on the Spanish Ṣaqāliba, however fascinating, have to be reconsidered in the light of Daniel Ayalon's reconsideration of the whole question of the Ṣaqāliba, as set out in his 'On the eunuchs in Islam', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, Jerusalem, 1979.

Further examples that show the value of Slav eunuchs in Fātimid times are furnished by Ibn Khallikān (De Slane's translation, vol. 1, pp. 253–4), who refers to the slaughter of Barjanān, the negro eunuch, at the command of al-Hākim in 390/1000. He was killed by Abū'l-Fadl Raydān al-Ṣaqlābī, the prince's umbrella-bearer. He, in turn, was killed three years later by Mas'ūd al-Ṣaqlābī, al-Hākim's sword-bearer. The author calls Ṣaqāliba 'a race which produces eunuchs'. The great Fātimid general in Egypt, Jawhar, was of Dalmatian origin. He founded Cairo and al-Azhar. His career is one of the greatest ever made by a Balkan convert to Islam before the Ottomans.

21. Stanko Guldescu, *History of Medieval Croatia*, 1964, p. 304.

Dubrovnik and the Arab East

With Ragusa (Dubrovnik) the Arabs maintained a long and often close relationship. Earlier the city had been the goal of raiders, but it later became a valuable partner in trade. Ragusa was decreed to be a safe haven from the disturbances within the Balkan interior. For example, Albanians and Bosnians, partisans of the tribe of Dukagjin (Duchagini) around Shkodër, fled there to escape punishment. Survivors from Arab sea attacks sought asylum within its walls. We are told that the men of two castles on the mainland, from Chastal Spilan and Chastal Gradaz, made their dwellings on the coast, 'for they were of the race of Epidauros destroyed by the Saracens'.

Arab attacks on Ragusa were mounted for a number of reasons. Wood, which was scarce in the Levant, was an important incentive. One major siege of the walled city took place in 866–7. It lasted fifteen months and was only raised after the intervention of the Emperor, Basil the Macedonian, with his fleet. It is this siege that may have inspired the all but legendary, allegedly earlier, defeat of the Saracens in 783 by Orlando, or Roland, the Paladin. In this earlier phase, Ragusa's most active trade with the Muslim world was to be with the Caliphate in al-Andalus.

However it was later in the Mamlūk age that Ragusa's connection with the East attained its apogee. Despite the Crusades, and despite papal and ecclesiastical displeasure, commerce thrived, with a profitable trade with Mamlūk Egypt in timber and iron in exchange for Eastern spices. Ragusa also actively participated in commerce with slaves in the Levant.

According to Krekić:

At the end of the thirteenth century, the epoch when documents contain precise details about the traffic of slaves in Ragusa, in the majority they were exported in the West into Italy and to the Levant. Bosnia furnished the greatest number.

The schismatic Bogomil Bosnians were preyed upon by Western merchants. The reduction of schismatics to slavery was in no way deemed sinful. Ragusa was one channel whereby slaves were imported into the Balkans from Levantine countries. By the fifteenth century other categories of slaves had grown in number. These were men of Tartary, others were Circassians, some were black slaves from North Africa.

Spices that were transported from Alexandria and from Syria were of prime importance for the Ragusans, while in the Muslim ports in the East lead was the most sought-after commodity. It was mined in Bosnia

and elsewhere deep within the interior of the Balkan peninsula. Although the Venetians played a part in this trade, Ragusa dominated it.

Ragusa's commerce with the Muslim East received a significant boost through the extraordinary concessions granted by the papacy in 1341. These enabled the city to carry on commercial relations with unbelievers. Diplomatic links with the Muslim East followed. With their formidable fleet of some 300 ships, the sixteenth-century Ragusa merchants were to sail and travel freely, and they were able to establish factories in what were by then Turkish-held towns and in Ottoman Balkan cities. There were significant Ragusan colonies in North Africa as well, including Fez in Morocco. Many Croats lived in Egypt in the Mamlūk age, including citizens from Dalmatia, Istria and Slovenia.

The capitulations of 1510, which Ragusa (*Rakūziyya*) received from the Mamlūk Sultān al-Ashraf Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī (1500–16), enabled its merchants to trade beyond Alexandria. Henceforth, their efforts were concentrated on the safe conduct of merchandise from the area of Suez and southern Sinai to Cairo and Alexandria, where their ships waited for the spices from the East Indies. There seems to have been a connection between this understanding of 1510 and a project by the Ragusans to dig a canal between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, one of the earliest serious attempts to construct a Suez canal, although the effort to induce the Mamlūks to attempt it was to end in failure.

When Selīm I conquered Egypt and Syria in 1516/7, the Ragusan establishments in Alexandria and Cairo were of a long standing. What was to follow was a yet bolder commercial discovery of Persia, India and beyond. It was short in duration since the Ragusans were hotly challenged by both Venetians and Portuguese. This enterprise was to be the conclusion to the centuries-old record of sea communication between the Adriatic coast and the Islamic East.²²

The oldest Arabic document (925/1519) in the Archives of Dubrovnik is an appeal by Marin, the Ragusan consul in Alexandria, addressed to the first Ottoman governor, Khāyir Beg, requesting the lifting of a payment to the Catalan consul that had been imposed by the city Qādī

22. On this project Professor Charles Beckingham has kindly given me the following three useful references:

F. Kinchmayer, *La Caduta della Repubblica aristocratica di Ragusa*, Zara, 1900, p. 46.
 R. Fulin, *Il Canale di Suez e la Repubblica de Venezia* in *Archivio Veneto*, vol. 2, 1871, pp. 175–213.
 F.M. Appendini, *Notizie istorico-critiche sulle antichità, storia e letteratura dei Ragusei*, Ragusa, 1802, vol. 1, p. 213.

on his fellow-citizens, who hitherto had been exempt, having been awarded a special and independent status by the Sultan of the Burjī Manilūks, al-Ashraf Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī. His name clearly inspired memories of a cordial and privileged relationship between the merchants of the city-state and the ruler of Egypt and it evoked a vision of an age of great prosperity.²³

Pecheneg and Khwārizmian Muslims in medieval Hungary

One of the earliest Arab geographers who referred to the Pechenegs in south-eastern Europe was al-İṣṭakhrī (*circa* 950). He identified them as a nomadic Turkish tribe which, in his days, was moving westwards between the kingdom of the Khazars, in the Caspian region and the North Caucasus, and Byzantium. The vigorous action of Vladimir of Rūs in the late tenth century against these nomads, and their defeat at Kiev by Yaroslav less than a century later, pushed them further to the west in the direction of the northern borders of the Balkans. Eventually they crossed Byzantium's Danubian frontier. This was in part due to the pressure of other nomads, Oghuz and Cumans, who in turn were also moving into regions of Eastern Europe from Inner Asia. Pecheneg pressure and intrusions of the eleventh century had been preceded by others at least a century earlier. In 1048, the Pechenegs caused havoc in Bulgaria, and the interior of the Balkans was to suffer widely from their intrusions. Continued military efforts by the Byzantines, aided by the Cumans, achieved success in 1122. From then onwards the Pechenegs were to enter the Balkans as part of a far wider and diluted movement of Turkic groups. Already in the tenth century they had entered Hungary. However, it was in the eleventh century that the greater part of them, whether pagan, nominally Christian or Muslim, were to begin to play a part in the history of Hungary and of the Balkans as a whole.²⁴

One of the countries through which Muslims entered Hungary during the reign of Prince Taksony (mid tenth century) was Bulgaria, although the Muslim groups in question are more likely to have been traders or merchants (possibly Pechenegs) who had originated in the

23. Besim Korkut, *Arapski Dokumenti u Državnom Arhivu u Dubrovniku*, Sarajevo: Orijentalni Institut, 1961, vol. 11, document from Alexandria (925/1519), pp. 143–154.

24. On the activities of the Pechenegs in this early period see Denis Sinor (ed.), *Cambridge History of Inner Asia*, Cambridge University Press, 1990, esp. pp. 270–5.

Volga region of Bulghār. Two of them were called Billa and Boscu.²⁵ That Muslims in Bulgaria presented problems for the Danube region is confirmed by a letter of Pope Nicholas, dated 866, which ordered the 'extirpation of the Saracens' from the region.²⁶ It was during the reigns of the Hungarian kings Stephen I (997–1038) and especially Stephen II (1115–31) and Geza II (1141–61) that the incoming half-Muslim population were given considerable liberty. They served in the border-guard system or in other duties, both military and civil.²⁷ According to John Kirnamos (1150–65) these subjects of the King of Hungary fought at the time alongside the Dalmatians against the armies of the Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus. Numbers of them accepted Christianity, while some relapsed or remained crypto-Christians; they were always at risk of royal displeasure and oppression, especially at the time of the First Crusade.

The question of the precise ethnic and national identity, and the lasting influence, of the Hungarian Muslims, who are referred to in both the Arabic and the medieval Hungarian sources, has inspired a number of hypotheses that have been aired in articles published both in Hungary and elsewhere, and there is much variety of opinion among those who

25. T. Lewicki says in his article, 'Madjar, Madjaristān (in pre Ottoman period); *Encyclopedia of Islam* (new edition), p. 1014, 'According to a passage in the Hungarian Chronicle known as the *Anonymi gesta Hungarorum*, composed in 1196–1203, there arrived in Hungary, during the reign of the prince Taksony (?955–972 AD), a group of Ishmaelites, i.e. Muslims, originally from *terra Bular* (Bulgaria), led by two semi-legendary figures (whose names begin with the letter 'b'), Billa (Ar Bi'llāh?) and Boscu (?). Lewicki suggests that the weight of scholarly opinion favours Bulghār as the departure point of these two 'Ishmaelites', though he himself does not exclude Bulgaria or the Danube as an alternative. It might be pointed out that the story of a Yemenite expedition into the Bulghār region, reported by Abū Ḥāmid al-Gharnāṭī (d. 1160), mentions an army of Yemenites led by two commanders, one of whom reached the Bulghār capital on the Volga, while the other reached the Hungarians (Bāshghūrd). These accounts may not be connected. On the other hand they may reflect some Islamic folktales that circulated in the region of Eastern Europe in the twelfth century.'

26. Lewicki, *ibid.*, p. 1014, says that a letter exists written by Pope Nicholas in the year 866. In it he orders the extirpation of the Saracens in Bulgaria of the Danube. On this whole question see Smail Balić, 'Muslims in Eastern and South Eastern Europe', *Journal of the Institute for Muslim Minority Affairs*, vol. V1, 1985, pp. 361–74.

27. A duty they would seem to have fulfilled, in some ways similar to the employment of the Tatars in Lithuania and Poland at a later age. See Sir Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, London, 1935, pp. 193–4.

are most expert in judging the issue.²⁸ A number of names, sometimes interchangeable and occasionally superseded, the one by the other, are to be found. They include the Ismaëlitae, the Bissermini (Bezermen or Buzurmen), Hungarian Böszörmény (meaning Muslim) the Caliz, Kalez or Qualiz, and the Saraceni (Szereezen).

The Ismaëlitae were predominantly Pecheneg, although, according to Szekely²⁹, it is known that the Ismaëlitae (Hysmaelitae), in a document of the Hungarian king Emeric (196) written on the occasion of the market at Eszék (Valkö, now Osijek on the lower Drava in Yugoslavia), were apparently not Pechenegs.

The Bissermini (Buzurmen) were in all likelihood arabised or persianised Khwārizmians from Central Asia, either agriculturalists or traders, who had entered Hungary from the Volga region or from Bulgaria. The Caliz (Arabic *Khawāliṣ*) were similarly Khwārizmians, though including some Khazar Kabars and Pechenegs who were to be employed as auxiliaries by the Hungarians. To what extent these peoples were other than nominal Muslims is uncertain. Some were superficially Islamised and some others were to exchange their beliefs, under pressure, for Christianity. Some for a time retained Zoroastrian beliefs. However, according to al-Bakrī (*circa* 1068), there were to be found *saqīhs* and Qur'an reciters among them. The Pechenegs were frequently settled close to Hungary's frontiers, which were delineated by a wooden stockade on its western border, around Fejervár Tolna and between the Danube and Lake Balaton. Like all the Hungarian Muslims these communities were to be particularly ravaged and dispersed following the arrival of the Tatars in 1241.

Who the 'Saraceni' were has been debated. Much of the argument is based on the Arabic terms for nationalities that are employed by the Hispano-Arab writer and traveller Abū Ḥāmid of Granada (1080–1170), who came to Hungary in 1150/1 and stayed in 'Bāshghīrī/

28 For a breakdown and description of all the groups in question, see Lewicki, *op. cit.*, pp. 1014–15. For a general introduction to the role of the Pechenegs in Balkan and East European history, see C.A. Macartney, 'The Petchenegs', *Slavonic Review*, 1929, pp. 340–55. On the first incursions of the Pechenegs into the Balkans and the Arab writers, see Petre Diaconu, *Les Petchénègues au Bas Danube*, *Bibliotheca Historica Romanae* (no. 27), Bucarest, 1970, pp. 11–21.

29 All these matters are discussed by Gyorgy Szekely in full in 'Les Compacts entre Hongrois et Musulmans aux XIe–XIIe Siècles', *The Muslim East. Studies in honour of Julius Germanus*, edited by Gy. Kaldy-Nagy, Budapest: Lorand Eotvos University, 1974, pp. 53–74.

Bāshghūrd' for three years. He put down his impressions in two of his works, *Tuhfat al-Albāb* and *al-Mu'rib 'an ba'd 'ajā'ib al-Maghrib*³⁰. In the former he remarks:³¹

This [land] of Bāshghūrd is [the home] of numerous communities. It has a twenty-eight cities, each one of which is like Isfahan and Baghdad, wherein to be found [God's] bounty, favour and abundant blessing and a luxury and easiness of living that can neither be accounted for nor quantified. My eldest son, Ḥāmid, there married two ladies from among the Muslim noblemen and he [by them] begat male offspring.

In the *Mu'rib*, Abū Ḥāmid subdivides the Muslims of Hungary into two broad categories, the *Awlād al-Maghāriba* (who were in royal favour) and the *Awlād al-Khawārizmiyyīn*, whose East European or Central Asian origin is not disputed. As for the former, views diverge as to whether the term 'men of the Western lands' indicates, as it does so today, Muslims principally from North Africa and Spain, or is perhaps a reference to Pechenegs or Cumans from the region of Kiev.³²

Vilmos Voigt, would see the former as a reference to Arabs or other Muslims, whose original home was in Muslim Spain or in southern Italy or Sicily. He bases his hypothesis on the following three points:

(a) At the end of the eleventh century, Kálmán (Coloman), king of Hungary, made a treaty with the southern Italian and Sicilian Normans, and in 1087 he married Busilla, the daughter of Roger, the Norman ruler of Sicily. She came to Hungary with members of her court. In view of the nature of the half-Oriental life and culture of Sicily at that time, he supposes that a number of the communities could well have been Arab or Muslim.

(b) The thirteenth-century Anjou kings Károly (Charles) I and Lajos (Louis) I tried to place Naples and Sicily under the Hungarian crown.

30. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Sulaymān al Mīzinī al-Qaysī was born in 473/1080 and died in 565/1169. His two known works are *Kitāb al-Mu'rib 'an ba'd 'ajā'ib al Maghrib*, published and translated by C.E. Dubler, Madrid, 1953, and the second, *Tuhfat al Albāb wa nukhbāt al-a'jāb*, was published by Gabriel Ferrand in *Journal Asiatique*, 1925, pp. 1–148 and 195–307. Although sections on Russia and Africa have been translated, it is only recently that a complete translation has appeared in Madrid.

31. There is a full discussion by Ivan Hrbek of the question of Bāshgīrd (Bāshghūrd) and its precise ethnic and geographical connotation in the text of Abū Ḥāmid al Gharnāṭī in 'Ein Arabischer Bericht über Ungarn', *Acta Orientalia Hungarica*, 5, 1955, pp. 205–30.

32. See 'Les noms des Hongrois et de la Hongrois chez les médiévaux géographes arabes et persans', *Folia Orientalia*, 19, 1978.

This indicates a continuing interest of the Hungarian kings in the Arab-influenced south.

(c) The Hungarian term *Szerecsen* (from the Arabic *Sharqiyīn*) is derived from the northern Italian *saresin-seresin*. This same word in southern Italy explicitly denotes an Arab, later a negro. It is not likely that such a term would have come into Hungarian by this channel if it were meant that the people in question were Pechenegs from Southern Russia or Arabs from the Levant.

The above arguments, are taken up in his concluding remarks:

At the very end of the eleventh century, Hungary entered into Mediterranean trading life. By 1105 the Hungarian conquest of the Dalmatian seaports was complete and the long-lasting military and commercial war of the Hungarian kings mainly against Venice (but against other Mediterranean trading centres as well) then began. These historical contacts are reflected by some of the Italian loan words of the Hungarian language: eg *bárka* (bark), *gálya* (galley), *sajka* (small boat) and *szamár* (donkey) which are all inevitable requirements of sea trade (and sea battle). In the course of the Crusades it becomes evident that the Mohammedans of the Holy Land are in Hungarian eyes (Saracens) (*szerecsen*), in the same way as the Arab traders of the Maghreb or the Mohammedan minters, usurers and mercenaries of Hungary. The quoted development of the meaning of the Latin word *saracenus* in Hungary is accounted for by this complicated crosscurrent.

From what has been said above one may draw the following conclusions. The Hungarian sources prove that traders and soldiers of the western part of the Mediterranean were known by the name *szerecsen* 'Maghrebean Arab' at the latest in the first half of the twelfth century, and they lived in Hungary as well. At this time the Hungarian Kingdom was probably the most north-eastern point of their expansion.³³

Not dissimilar is the view expressed by Charles d'Eszlary in his article 'Les musulmans hongrois du Moyen-Age (VIIe-XIVe siècles)',³⁴ though in more general terms. Here he is more concerned with one of the alternative nomenclatures, the *Ismaëlitae*, whom he identifies as Muslims coming from both East and West. Again, the Arabs are included. 'On account of the liberation of the Spanish provinces, a

33. Vilmos Voigt, 'Hungarian Sources on Early Mediterranean Contacts', *Proceedings of the First Congress of Mediterranean Studies of Arab-Berber Influence*, edited by Micheline Gallay and David R. Marshall, Algiers: Société Nationale d'Edition et de Diffusion, 1973, pp. 213-28.

34 In *Revue Ibla* (Tunis), vol. XIX, 1956, pp. 375-86.

number of Moors emigrated. They felt insecure because of the Crusades and the rigorous stipulations of the synods of Toledo and Latran. The so-called negroes, as they were known at this time, were a mixture of Arab refugees from the Byzantine Empire that had fallen under Latin domination, immigrant Muslims, Bulgars and Bashkir Hungarians who, in fleeing from the Mongols, had crossed the Volga, and, lastly, apostate Hungarians. Such newcomers established themselves in the countries of purely Hungarian population of the Great Plain and beyond the Danube: quickly adopting the Hungarian language, they remained strangers in regard to their religion and their customs.³⁵

Al-Idrīsī (548/1154) describes the Yugoslav coast, Albania and the Macedonian interior

Alain Ducellier, in his book *La Façade Maritime de l'Albanie au Moyen Âge*³⁶ which especially centres on the region of Durrës and Vlorë in Albania between the eleventh and the fifteenth centuries, has indicated that Idrīsī's *Book of Roger*³⁷ was perhaps the most important source for our knowledge of the trans-Balkan itineraries. Idrīsī provides valuable information about the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia, including such ports as Kotor, Ragusa, Trogir, Sibenik, Zara and as far north as the regions to the south-east of Venice and Trieste. He also supplies an especially valuable itinerary inland from the Albanian port of Durrës towards Constantinople. Also interesting are references to the Black Sea coast. A number of these routes meet at key localities, whether the final destination be Belgrade (Bilghrādūn) or Thessalonica. Several of the localities that he lists have not been identified with certainty although there is enough precision to indicate that the ancient Via Egnatia was substantially preserved despite the intrusion of Robert Guiscard's Crusading exploits and the riposte of the Byzantines, whose mercenary forces contained many nationalities.³⁸ The lakes of the

35. *ibid.* A passage from the Arab geographer Yāqūt, cited in W.T. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, pp. 193–4, is quite inconclusive; any reference to Bulghār, or Bulgaria, merely indicates that the 'Islamic reformers' came from that region. The informants (who were Ḥanafīs) had no clear idea of their ancestry.

36. Ducellier, *Variorum*, *op. cit.*, XV, pp. 1–7.

37. *ibid.*, pp. 6–7 and *passim*.

38. Set out in Henri Grégoire's article 'La Chanson de Roland et Byzance', *Byzantion*, XIV, 1939, pp. 267–315.

Kosovo-Macedonian region are particularly singled out as crossing points, Ohrid being among the most important.

Idrīsī remarks:

The road from Durrës to Gjirokastër leaves Durrës on the Adriatic sea and pursues an inland route in the direction of Constantinople. It passes over Deabolis [Tabarla?], a distance of two days. This is a town located on the summit of a mountain and it is four days distant from Ohrid. Ohrid [Ukhrīda] is a mighty city. It is amply housed and populated. Broad in its scope in trade and in commerce. It is located above pleasing mountains. Near to it is a lake wherein fish is caught by fishermen in skiffs. The lake is situated to the south of the city. It takes three days to circumvent the lake and some of the city is sited by the lake side. Between Ohrid and Polog/Tetova [Būlghū] is a journey of two days march. It is a beautiful town on a large mountain. Between it and Skopje [Usqūfiya] is a day's journey to the north-east. Skopje is a large town with adjacent public buildings and habitations. It has an abundance of vines and of cereal crops.³⁹

Idrīsī describes the major rivers of Serbia and Macedonia and he also describes lakes in the region of Kastoria and Ioannina.⁴⁰

In ancient times, the Via Egnatia was important both economically and strategically. Relations between Albania and Macedonia, under the Byzantines, were largely military and political. This route, via Deabolis and Ohrid, is, in the opinion of Ducellier,⁴⁰ the one which gave access to 'the nerve centre of the Balkans, the region of the lakes', a reality that was not to be lost on the Turks, or on those wandering dervish orders that originated in the Middle East and in Central Asia, and which sought new territories and sanctuaries when Islam began to penetrate the interior of this peninsula. For the enemies of Byzantium, the Normans and the Crusaders, the Via Egnatia afforded the obvious route for them to follow in order to reach their eastern destinations. Durrës was a valuable Adriatic harbour, and the route between it and Thessalonica was the principal access to the Levant. Another connected Vlorë and Almyros on the coast of Thessaly. Idrīsī is remarkably precise in the detailed information that he furnishes. At that time, Durrës, and Vlorë to a lesser degree, had two essential economic functions: they were used for the export of local produce, and were intermediary links in a chain

39. al-Idrīsī, *Opus Geographicum* (E. Cerulli, F. Gabrieli, G. Levi della Vida, L. Petech, G. Tucci), Fasc. V, Naples-Rome: Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli 1975, pp. 792-3.

40. Ducellier, *Variorum, op. cit.*, IV: 'L'Arbanon et les Albanais au XIe siècle', p. 367.

that united the West and the Levant, being the outlet on the Adriatic of the most important land-routes of the Balkans. The economic axis which gave life to the Albanian coast was an East-West axis.⁴¹

The coastline had maritime importance, as is also confirmed by Idrīsī. The Albanian ports were stages. 'To go from Durrës to Constantinople, following the contour of the coast-line, one first passes Vlorë [Valona]. From then onwards this route enters the Aegean Sea and finally reaches Constantinople itself.'

Our Arab geographer gives little information about the inhabitants of the interior, although the Serbs are specifically mentioned. It seems certain that he received reports from travellers who had journeyed into the Balkans from Italy and Sicily. Trade to the south has already been mentioned in connection with Hungary's relations with that quarter. What we know of the presence of Oriental peoples at that time in the Balkan interior is extremely sketchy. However, Grégoire, in his studies of the significant part played by this region in the geographical setting for the *gestes* of both West and East, emphasises that the battle of Buten-trot (Butrint) opposite Corfu, in 1081, was a major one. The Normans of Robert Guiscard were faced by a Byzantine army that included a barbarous and a pagan vanguard, some 2,000 Turks, including auxiliary Patzinaks (Pechenegs).⁴²

The Arnauts

The Albanians (whom the Turks were to call Arnavut and the Arabs al-Arnā'ūt) claim to be descended from the Illyrians, the ancient people of Bronze and Iron age times in this region. Their ancestors had been bold seamen whose ships had taken them to Italy and along the Adriatic to the Levant. They bartered with foreign lands, especially with the Phoenicians, with the Hellenic ports and with the cities of Italy. Later the Illyrians came under the rule of the Greeks and the Romans. The second-century AD geographer, Ptolemy of Alexandria, listed the

41 Ducelher, *Variorum*, *ibid.*, XV, 6-7, furnishes details as to the changes in this ancient axis, by land and sea, at this period. See also Stojanka Kenderova and Bojan Béséliev, *La Péninsule Balkanique Réprésenté sur les Cartes d'al Idrisi*, Sofia, 1990, for the Black Sea regions.

42. See Grégoire. 'La Chanson de l'an 1085 ou l'étymologie de Baligant et de Calferne', *Bulletin de la Classe de Lettres de l'Académie Royale de Belgique*, XXV, 1939, pp. 240-4.

Illyrian tribes. He noted among them the 'Albanoi', who dwelt in the mountains between Durrës, Dibra and Albanopolis.

To a large extent, the Illyrians preserved their language, although under Roman rule many Latin words were incorporated within it. In the first century of the Christian era, Christianity found a response. One recalls the statement by St Paul in Romans 15, verse 19: 'Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.'

In the second century, two of the earliest proselytes of the faith proclaimed its message, St Donat in Aulon and St Ast in Dyrrah. In Albania, as elsewhere in the Balkans, ancient paganism lingered on, and within the deep and impenetrable interior it has continued to linger, or was but partially transformed by the Christian, whether Catholic or Orthodox, Muslim (and Marxist) beliefs that were to be transfused within it, or imposed, willingly or reluctantly, upon it. Ramadan Sokoli, in his *Chansons populaires albanaises*,⁴³ illustrates how the cult of the sun is alive in Albanian folklore, in its oral tradition and in its toponyms, especially in regard to caves, during special seasons or during hours of daylight, where the sun's rays are perceived in their gloomy depths. The festival of St George is celebrated in a way that preserves a solar myth. In Kosovo horses and carts are loaded with cakes and sweetmeats and entire towns and villages take part in the festivities. Around Midsummer Day is the festival of St John, Shëngjin, when bonfires are lit in a blaze that turns a mountainous night into day. In time of drought a child is stripped and clad in grass and green leaves from head to toe. One sings from door to door:

'Rona, Rona, rain maker, bear rain to our ploughed fields, May grain swell in the ear, may good men eat harvests to the limits, from the corn that shall grow in abundance.'⁴⁴

During this early period and later, under the Byzantines, the Via Egnatia was the principal route in the mountainous interior for the publishers of the Christian faith, as well as for caravans that transported articles of commerce between East and West. Dyrrachion (Durrës) became the most important Byzantine port in the West. It was named 'the flower

43. Ramadan Sokoli, *Chansons populaires albanaises* (vol. 1: *Chansons Lyriques*), translation by K. Luka, Tirana: Editions 'Naim Frashëri', 1966, pp. 53–85.

44. *ibid.*, p. 79.

garden of the Adriatic'. Notable towns that were to grow up along the Via Egnatia were Skampa, near the later town of Elbasan, and Deabolis (later mentioned by Idrīsī) near the river Devoll.

Towards the end of the sixth century, the Slavs began to settle in both Albania and Macedonia, colonising the lands most suited to agriculture.⁴⁵ As a consequence of the barbarian invasions, of Slav colonisation, and of the revolts of slaves and tenants, the ancient system of slave-ownership that had hitherto been practised came to an end. The Illyrian population entered the annals of medieval history known by a new name coined from the Illyrian Albanoi tribe that had inhabited the region between Durrës and Dibra, north of lake Ohrid. The medieval Albanians came to be called Arbëri/Arbëni and their country Arbanon.⁴⁶ In the ninth century Byzantium, in order to defend the Albanian provinces that were under threat from the Bulgarians and the Arabs in southern Italy, established two 'themes', Durrës (Durazzo) and Nikopoja. However, in 851 the Bulgarians captured Ohrid and then, between 852 and 927, Berat and Mallakastra. Finally, under Tsar Simeon (893–927), they captured all the 'theme' of Nikopoja and thirty castles in the 'theme' of Durrës, although the city itself did not surrender.

At the end of the tenth century the Bulgarian kingdom renewed its expansionism under Tsar Samuel, and Ohrid became its capital. In 989 he captured Durrës. By 1018, however, Byzantium had re-established its rule in Albania and its borderlands. Half a century later, Pope Gregory VII incited the Normans in Sicily to attack the Byzantine territories in this part of the Balkans. In 1096 the Crusaders, led by Bohemund son of Robert Guiscard, passed through Albania. There was another invasion in 1107 when the Normans landed in Vlorë although they could not capture Durrës and withdrew a year later. By 1190 the Albanian nobles had founded principalities. The first of these was centred at Krujë. These did not last long, although the Albanians revolted and stubbornly resisted the Byzantine empire of Nicea.

Michael II, the despot of Epirus⁴⁷, took advantage of the rebellions in order to renew his struggle against the Nicean emperor. He also made

45. Ducellier, *Variorum*, op. cit., X, 'Des Albanais ont-ils envahi le Kosovo?', pp. 1–8.

46. Ducelier, *Variorum*, ibid., IV, 'L'Arbanon et les Albanais au XIe siècle', pp. 353–68, where the geography and society during this period of the history of medieval Albania and Epirus are discussed.

47. On the alliance between the Albanians and Michael II, on all fronts, see D. Nicol, *The Despot of Epirus*, Oxford, 1970, esp. pp. 48–9.

an alliance with the king of Sicily, Manfred Hohenstaufen. He granted to the latter the hand of his daughter Helena, and gave her as her dowry Corfu, Vlorë, Kanina, Berat and other Albanian towns in his possession. Manfred's help, however was not sufficient to prevent the triumph of the emperor of Nicea, who conquered Constantinople in 1261, restored the Byzantine empire, and subsequently subdued the despot of Epirus.

Although Manfred Hohenstaufen retained his possessions in Albania for a short period, it was only with the help of German and Arab vassals that he did so. He was eventually defeated and killed in a battle fought with Charles of Anjou, who became king of Sicily. The latter seized Vlorë, Kanina, Berat and Durrës in 1272. On February 2, 1272, Charles in Naples proclaimed the 'kingdom of Arbëria' and declared himself its king. He granted fiefs to the Albanian nobles, although his intentions were unrealised when the chief office of state and the fiefs were filled by members of the Catholic French and Italian nobility. Suppression of popular resentment followed and the Albanian locals were thenceforth to support the Byzantines against the Anjous, who withdrew from Albania in 1286.

They returned, under Philip, in 1304. This time the Albanians, fearful of the growth of the Serbian state, were compelled to side with Philip who divided power between the Arbëresh nobles. Tuliilm Blenishti was appointed as marshal of the Angevin armies in Albania, Tanush Thopia was made a count and recognised as feudal lord of the lands between the Mati and Shkumbi rivers. Andreas Muzaki was given the title of 'despot of Arbëria' and the lands between the Shkumbi and Semani. Despite this, Albania fell under Serbian domination for a time, especially during the reign of Stephen Dušan (1331–5). The fourteenth century, however, was a prosperous time for the Albanian cities, Durrës in particular. Great nobles lived in castles, like the Thopias in Krujë, the Muzakis in Berat and the Dukagjinis in Lezhë. Money was minted and banners depicted lordly emblems, the crowned lion of the Thopia, a two-headed eagle for the Muzakis and a white single-headed eagle for the Dukagjinis. In the fifteenth century the Kastriots identified themselves by the now famous two-headed eagle against a red background.⁴⁷

It is with these Albanian principalities of the later medieval period that one finds the first reference to Turkish mercenaries and auxiliaries. This was especially true of the region around Krujë (Arbanon). In Turkish documents of the fifteenth century onwards that region was to be called

Sancak-i Arvanid or Sancak-i Arnavud.⁴⁸ The name was extended to the whole of Albania.

The Ottoman conquest in Albania was accomplished according to a well established pattern. First the Turks were mercenaries, serving Christians. Later, by involvement in local or wider conflicts, they subdued the Christian lords and reduced them to vassalage.⁴⁹ As early as 1291, Michael Palaeologos used Turkish mercenaries to halt the advance of the troops of Charles of Anjou into Albania. In 1337, Andronikos III Palaeologus subjugated the Albanian nomads, living between Kanina and Arta, with the help of a Turkish army. In the fourteenth century the annexation of Krujë was a grave loss to the Venetians in Durrës. It was governed by Helena Thopia and by her Venetian husband Marco Barbadico. In 1394 the couple gave it to the Turks. Its inhabitants were rewarded for this surrender. Yaqut Pasha and Khodja Firuz granted them exemption from various taxes.⁵⁰

Balkan regions, the 'Chanson de Roland' and medieval Arabic folk epics

Towns and districts mentioned by Idrīsī in his *Book of Roger*, especially in Albania, Epirus, Macedonia and a part of Serbia, were a source for toponyms in the *Chanson de Roland*. They may also be alluded to in several of the major Arabic folk epics, those that were composed in Egypt and Syria, particularly in the *Sīras* of 'Antar b. Shaddād, Dhāt al-Himma and perhaps, Sayyid Baṭṭāl.⁵¹ To Henri Grégoire we owe the pioneer detective-like assembling of the evidence which mainly reflects the historical landings of the Normans in Albania and the clashes

48. *Arnāūfī*, *Arnā'ūd*, *Arnā'ūd*, etc. is still used in the Balkans, though most frequently among families of Albanian origin in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. I have heard village boys in the region near Struga and Kališta and Radolišta, west of Lake Ohrid, call themselves by this name.

49. Elizabeth A. Zachariadou, 'Marginalia on the History of Epirus and Albania (1380–1418)', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, vol. 78, Vienna, 1988, p. 196.

50. *ibid.*, p. 206.

51. The Arab hero Sayyid Baṭṭāl is both Arabic and Turkish. In ancient Arabic versions (which are lost, or survive principally in *Dhāt al-Himma*) events are concerned with wars between Arabs and Byzantines. The account is transformed into that of a Gazi whose burial-place is allegedly in the Baktāshī sanctuary at Seyvit Battal Gazi in Asia Minor.

that followed against the Byzantines, assisted by their Oriental and non-Oriental mercenaries, between 1080 and 1085. The wars ended with the death of Bohemund and the sound defeat of his father, Robert Guiscard, the leader of the military expedition. The names of towns, harbours and lakes such as Butrint in Albania, where a major battle was fought, or 'Jericho' and Kanina in Epirus, or 'Malprose' Lake Prespa in Macedonia, have been convincingly identified; so too the identities of major heroic figures and political leaders such as Baligant, who is none other than (George) Palaeologos, the Byzantine general. Grégoire pairs him with a certain Balkūm (Baligant) in the Arabic romance of '*Antar*'.⁵²

The Balkan framework for the Pyrenean setting for the *Chanson de Roland* was an exciting discovery. The Orientals were not the allies of the Spanish Moors, nor Turks and others of the enemy that were fought by the Crusaders in Asia Minor: Twenty-seven were names of nations. The Esclavoz were the Slavs, Sorbres and Sorz the Serbians and Serbs, the Ermines and Ormalens were the Armenians, the Turs and Pers were the Turks and Persians, the Pinceneis were the Pechenegs, the Avers the Avars, the Hums and Hongres the Huns and Hungarians, the Astrimonies were the people from Strymon in Macedonia. All of them were represented in the Byzantine army. There were strong contingents of Pechenegs already in 1069 with Romanoes Diogenes' expedition against the Turks, and the presence of Pechenegs in Alexios' troops was resented by the Normans, who a few years later complained to the Pope that their adversary was employing Scythian barbarians. Armenians had always been numerous in the Byzantine army, and during the siege of Durrës, a mass of Serbs came under King Bodin to help the Basileus against the Normans. The linkage between Norman, Byzantine and Arab was explored in detail by Grégoire.⁵³

Over and above this, Grégoire considered the impact of Guiscard's failed campaign in the Balkans as not only having influenced the *Chanson* but, in a not dissimilar way, as having furnished the names of individuals and, somewhat less, countries, peoples and events within Arabic popular romances of the same period. Although several are mentioned by him,

52. See H. Grégoire, 'La Chanson de l'an 1085 ou l'étymologie de Baligant et de Califerne', *Bulletin de la Classe des lettres de l'Académie Royale de Belgique*, XXV, 1939, pp. 211–73.

53. Grégoire's view was that although the *Chanson de Roland* had a Northern author, *circa* 1085, perhaps in order to exhort the Normans of Italy and of France to support the effort to regain Epirus, a trouvère was added to the *Chanson* proper, a lengthy episode full of Byzantine materials.

it is with the most famous of them, the *Sīrat 'Antar*, that he especially observed a connection:

I think that nothing can be found in the *Antar* Romance, which could not belong to the end of the XIth nor the beginning of the XIIth century. What is *Antar's* last exploit? He kills . . . Bohemond, and rescues Rome besieged by the latter . . . He does that as an ally of the Byzantine Emperor, as an ally of the King of Rome called Balkām. One remembers that the killing of Bohemond, the greatest enemy of both the Byzantines and the Moslems, was mentioned also in the *Del-Hemma*, where it is said to be the merit of *Del-Hemma* herself. It is an epic law that the supreme victory over the national enemy 'number' one must be kept in store for the greatest hero of the 'geste'. In the German epic, it is always the insuperable Dietrich von Berne or Theodoric of Verona who survives all other champions.

Antar, the Arab knight *par excellence*, saves Byzantium and Rome and kills the great Norman Bohemond. This is certainly a direct echo of the alliance of the Byzantine Empire with Moslem states and princes in their fight against the Normans. And if we had the slightest doubt about that, that doubt would be suppressed by the very names of the relatives of Bohemond; Mubert, Subert, Kubert. History is so vaguely known to philologists that even Heller has not seen the truth: 'Hier haben wir erst mit einer Gruppe von Namien auf -bert zu tun. Tatsächlich ist dies vielleicht die haufigste Endung der altfranzösischen Namien (Aubert, Dagobert, Englebert . . .)', and he cites a dozen or more similar names, forgetting that Bohemond's father was Robert (Guiscard).

Antar's expedition as an ally of Byzantium is simply Alexios Comnenos' and Palaeologos' war against Robert and Bohemond: and this at once clears up the name of the King of Rome, or of the Romans, Balkām, who is Palaeologos himself, but under the French form of Baligan.

The *Antar* Romance thus affords us an unexpected confirmation of our identification of Palaeologos with Baligan in the *Chanson de Roland*. In the Syria of the Crusaders, evidently, the famous war of 1081–1085, celebrated by the French *trouvères*, inspired the Arab novelist, and we may conclude that the *Antar* Romance was completed exactly at the same period as the other epics aforementioned.⁵⁴

However, the most recent part of this folk epic of interest to Grégoire, after detailed inspection, reveals the hand of a romancer of the Mamlūk age.⁵⁵ It was shaped, or retold, at least a century after the Balkan

54. H. Grégoire, 'The historical element in Western and Eastern Epics Digems Sayyid Battal-Dat-El-Hemma-Antar-Chanson de Roland' in *Autour de l'épopée byzantine*, London: Variorum Reprints, 1975, pp. 531–2.

55. There are references to Mamlūk weaponry and to technical terms that brings the *Antar* Romance into the same company as the typically Mamlūk *Sīras* of *al-Zāhir Baybars* and *Sayf b. Dīn Yazan*.

campaigns of Robert Guiscard and Bohemund. Furthermore, the geographical setting includes Spain where there is a reference to the talismanic idol (*sanam*) that once guided Norse ships near (Cadiz), and allusions to a major sea battle, fought with Mamlūk weaponry, in the eastern Mediterranean, to Rome and to Adriatic Italy, and to Sicily (where, in an adjoining section of the *Sīra*, a church at Najrān in Arabia has been merged with tales about the suspended remains of Aristotle in a church in Palermo or Cyprus stories that were reported by the Arab geographers).⁵⁶ Kūbart's name may have been inspired by that of Robert (Guiscard). Sir Jawān/Sinjāwan (Shēngjin?) could have been inspired by (Raymond de) St Gilles, a person found in the Turkish folk epic of Abū Muslim, Balkām (Baligant) by Palaeologos, and King al-Ṣāfāt (possibly Ṣāffāt 'archangels in ranks') might conceivably have some association with the name of the port of Suffada (rather than Safad) to the north of Durrës in Albania. Recorded as Sopot(on), and receiving mention in Idrīsī's *Book of Roger* (1192), it was a zone for commercial exchange between the Dukagjinas and the Thopias.

However, no such identifications can be made with the person of a certain 'King of the Islands', and of a large expanse of land on the northern coast of the Mediterranean extending to a distance of some forty days' journey. In the text he is called Laylamān, the son of Ṣarāyir. His name suggests a connection with the people, the Alamani - Grégoire indicates that the 'German' mercenaries of the Byzantines, the Micenes and Nimetzi, were sometimes also called Alamani. However, this would place them in the wrong camp, as between foe and ally in the events recounted in the *Sīra*.

In view of the identifiable borrowings from Arabic geographical and historical literature within the *Sīrat 'Antar*, it is possible that the juxtaposition of the names Laylamān/Līlāmān and Ṣarāyir, together with the visit in state of the former to Heraclius, may have been inspired by Ṣāhib al-Sarīr (the 'lord of the throne' or 'the couch', or 'the ruler of the Dagestani province of Sarīr' in the Caucasus), namely the 'king of the Ṣanārians', who was given permission by Heraclius to sit on a throne in the palace in Byzantium. Laylamān, with variants, could have been a deformation of the name of the Sarmatian Alans (al-Lān) who had penetrated as far as Dalmatia in the age of the wanderings of Balkan

56. See F. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans, passim*, and his *Letters on Religion and Folklore*, London: Luzac, 1926, p. 91.

peoples. The Alans were deemed to be within the domains of the 'lord of the throne' or one of the provinces of Dagestan.

Still facing north, there is also another possibility (supported by the known commercial connections with that region, between Mamlūk Egypt and the Golden Horde) This is the region of Novgorod, Jūlmān or Gūlmān (Holmgard in the *sagas*), the trading state of Novgorod. Another possible explanation is the intrusion of a name not associated with Robert Guiscard's earlier campaign in the Balkans, but of a person that came to Arab ears somewhat later. Enrico Pescatore — Henry of Genoa, count of Malta — in association with the Genoese corsair Alamanno de Costa, count of Syracuse, became master of much of the Mediterranean. Alamanno was the principal figure in the conquest of Syracuse in 1204. Both were lauded by the Languedoc troubador Peire Vidal, whose adventurous life took him to Hungary and the Levant. Genoa figures notably in the *Sīrat Baybars*. In that same folk epic Maryam is described as a daughter of the King of Genoa. Maryam, or Māriya, is also the name of a wife of 'Antar in this particular section of the *Sīrat 'Antar*.⁵⁷

An effort like this to link somehow the folk epic of *Roland* and '*Antar*' is rarely convincing and is highly speculative; others may suggest alternatives. Its interest can only be marginal in postulating any conceivable direct influence on the Islamised Balkan peoples, whether before or after the Ottoman conquest at the end of the fourteenth century. Sounder

57. It is not intended to press such specific identifications or digress on the possible sources cited for the Arab romances. For example, Saint Gilles may have no Crusading connections and the name Sirjwān or Sanjwān (etc.) may be a simple borrowing from *The Story of Sarjīl ibn Sarjūn* (of Syria) who is referred to by Anwar G. Chehne, *Islam and the West, the Moriscos*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983, p. 105. Nevertheless, I would agree with Grégoire (and scholars before him) that there is a general atmosphere of the first Crusade present in the *Sīras* of '*Antar* and Dhāt al-Himma' in particular. To this may be added specific references to relevant geographical localities, including ports, in all likelihood in Italy, Sicily, Greece, Albania and Dalmatia.

There is the distinct possibility that the 'German' ruler in question is none other than the Hohenstaufen, the half-Oriental ruler of Sicily, Frederick II (1215–50). According to al-Dimashqī (d. 727/1327): 'The King of Kings of the Germans (*malik muṣṭafā al-Lamān*), named the "Inbirātūr", and called al-Inbirūr, has as his dwelling place the island of Sicily. In his kingdom there are fifteen lands.' It is likely that a copyist misread *al-Inbirur* and changed it to *Ibn Ṣarāyir*.

58. Rade Božović, *Arapi u Usmenoj Narodnoj Pesmi na Srpskohrvatskom jezūkom području*, Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade University, 1977, pp. 223–4.

evidence for folk-copies influences has emerged from the research carried out, and the examples collected, by Dr Rade Božović, an Arabist in Belgrade University. His examples display shared themes and episodes that mark both Arabic and Serb-Croat folk epic. They are especially centred around the person of Marko, the major hero of the South Slavs.⁵⁹ In the verse that Božović has examined:

... . Arab is superseded by the Gypsy, because they too are black, by the Turks, as a result of a genetic extension of the function, and the Arnauts, because folk tradition held them to be of Arab origin and also because they were sometimes treated as national enemies. The explanation for Arabs appearing as black should be sought not only in the influence of myth but also in the oral Arab tradition of frequent black heroes (Antara, Abu Xaid, Hilal, Abdul Wahab in the folk romances on Antara, the Hilal tribe and Princess Zatul Himma), and in black being the heraldic and war colour of the Abbasides.⁶⁰

What is also clear, is that the impact of the Arabs and of Islam in this literature most surely predates the ascendancy of the Turks. Pre-Ottoman Islam in the Balkans played at least some part:

The Arab appears very early in the epic tradition of Southern Slavs. He enters it already during the Byzantine-Arab wars in the frontier area between Byzantium and the Arab Caliphate. At that time (700–1000 AD) the Arab may very well have assumed the function of the ancient Slav Crnbog (Black God), and the Slav hero the function of Belbog (White God). However, as the Byzantine-Arab conflicts receded into the past, the character and function of the Arab began to take on mythical features. The structure of this character regresses, tending to return to its archetype, irrespective of the growing numbers of Southern Slavs adopting Christianity.

This is the situation in which Marko appears as a new factor in the collision. He assumes the function of the old Slav hero from the Byzantine-Arab frontier area. The arrival of the Turks marks the beginning of a revitalisation of the Arab's function. The myth fades and reality returns. Thus, with the Turks, the Arab enjoys a comeback in the epic poems of Southern Slavs, he will remain until after the new national enemy, the Turks, have finally established themselves.⁶¹

59. Božović, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

ORIENTAL INFLUENCES ON ISLAMIC AND NON-ISLAMIC LIFE AND LITERATURE IN BOSNIA, IN MACEDONIA AND AMONG THE ALBANIANS

'I travelled for a long time through the country of Rumelia, and saw many beautiful cities and was amazed by Allāh's blessing, but none amazed and thrilled me as that city of paradise — Skopje (Üsküp), through which the Vardar river flows.' (Dilger Zede, 17th century)

The Bogomil and Christian background

The focus of uninterrupted Balkan Islamic scholarship and literary activity lies in Bosnia and Hercegovina and certain predominantly Albanian towns and cities (Albania proper and Kosovo Pokrajina extending into Macedonia). However, one cannot overlook the special factors that have helped preserve the legacy in these specific countries. Elsewhere, more recent tragedies or movements of populations have distorted the picture and erased traces. There were once major centres also in Bulgaria and in what is now Greek Macedonia. These, likewise, played a prominent part in the Islamic life of the Balkans.¹

Up to the fifteenth century, all these districts were Christian-Orthodox, Catholic and (if it be viewed as a Christian heresy of a dualistic kind) Bogomilist. The latter, which also may be seen as a distinct religion, did not in its doctrines actively pave the way for the triumph of Islam. Its dualistic beliefs could hardly do so, although its doctrines reflected an inherent tendency towards heterodoxy or towards electicism in the whole region. This cannot be ignored. The premise that the Muslims of Bosnia and Hercegovina are 'descendants of converted Bogomils' has long been seriously challenged. The causes for Islamisation, it is held, cannot be so simply assigned. The coast was for centuries exposed to the world of Islam, and it was but a question of time before

1. Machiel Kiel's *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans: A legacy in stone* (collected studies series CS326), Variorum, 1990, is a mine of information on the Islamic legacy in Bulgaria and Greece.

that religion was carried into the mountainous hinterland behind. John V. A. Fine remarks:

Why did so many changes in religious confession occur in Bosnia and Herzegovina and not elsewhere in the Balkans (excluding Albania)? The reason I suggest is not hard to find and has nothing to do with the content of beliefs of the former heresy, even if such a view has frequently been advanced. The other Balkan states had one dominant form of Christianity. They had had and continued to preserve under the Turks fairly efficient and territorially organized church administration. Bosnia, unlike them had had competing faiths. And as a result of its religious history no faith in Bosnia was able to establish an efficient territorially based organization that could bind believers to its church — be it through belief or through a sense of community. Thus Bosnia's Christians, of whatever confession, had had little contact with any church, and few Bosnians were deeply attached to any religious community. In the 1450s and early 1460s many Bosnians had been forcibly brought to Catholicism. These converts certainly had not had time to become strong believing Catholics, they probably lacked interest in Catholicism, and many may have resented being forced to accept that faith. Thus many Bosnians were more or less between faiths — having renounced an earlier faith and not yet committed to the new one — with no deep belief in any.²

It is arguable that Islamic heterodoxy, or Sufism at a popular level, may well have found a fertile ground in some regions where Balkan Paulicians had become established in the Byzantine age. Nevertheless, there is no convincing evidence that Bogomilism *per se*, 'moderate' in its dualism, as in Bosnia, or in its 'absolute' position, as typified by some churches in Bulgaria, made a crucial contribution to Islamisation.

True, there were some beliefs that were held among the Paulicians and the Bogomils, who were moderate in their dualism, that might have made the Islamic faith less of a leap into the unknown. Furthermore, in the more distant past, the Muslim Arabs in parts of Asia Minor had been sought as protectors against the spiritual authoritarianism of the Greeks. It was, after all, the Paulician 'adoptionist' view that it was God the Father, and not the Word of God, who had made Heaven and Earth and all that existed therein. Jesus, the Messiah, was a created man, not a creator; he was made and was not the Maker. He was born a man of the Virgin Mary. He was never viewed as pre-existent Deity at all, but only as the newly-created Adam. The Trinity was nowhere used and, it seems, was rejected as unscriptural. However, such abstruse logic

2. John V.A. Fine, Jr, *The Bosnian Church: A New Interpretation*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1975, p. 386.

meant little to the rank and file of the peasant Bogomils. What mattered was local practice and simplified ritual, and here there were several Islamic parallels — the Bogomil church had neither priests nor magical sacraments. Images, pictures, holy crosses, incense and candles were considered, at best, irrelevant and, at worst, idolatrous. One would not have been surprised if, locally, a connection with an Islamic manner of thinking had not been made, and yet the hard evidence is nowhere evident. It was power, the presence or the lack of it, that seemed to have decided the issue within their isolated, persecuted or pressurised community.³

Any explanation of the origins of Bogomilism — be it one accepting Paulician influences or indigenous origins — reflects the unsettled state of religious values within Bulgaria at the time when Christianity was replacing the earlier pagan cults. Social change worked in favour of Islamisation. In their everyday life, the Bogomils found it hard to adapt themselves to a more advanced form of feudalism which was centred in powerful autonomous districts, and in which the materialistic money-commodity, as seen by them, must have represented a step towards an utter alienation of the actual physical world in which they lived, and their ideals, and the exclusively spiritual world of their divinity.⁴

None of the three creeds — Bogomil, Catholic and Orthodox — could, on its own, take upon itself the role of acting as the spiritual and cultural integrator of Bosnian society at that particular juncture. The feudal class — stimulated by the Ottoman administration when it came, and when it gave administrative opportunities to young and to unmarried yeomen through recruitment upon conversion to military service — was drawn to Islamisation. The Turks were well established in Bosnia after 1415. Nevertheless, the penetration of Islam was more radical and more far-reaching. The settlement of Islamised artisans to serve the Ottoman administration, the founding of entirely new towns on an Islamo-Oriental plan, the integration of many of the destroyed feudal class through the *timar* system,⁵ which was applied likewise among the

3. Moderate and absolute dualists and the differences between views are discussed by Bernard Hamilton in his 'Origins of the Dualist Church of Drugunthia', *Eastern Churches Review*, vol. V, no. 2, 1973, *op. cit.*

4. See John Fine's articles, *op. cit.*

5. *Timar* (Turkish 'a fief') is defined by Carleton S. Coon in *Caravan: The story of the Middle East*, London, 1952, p. 359, as 'a landed estate yielding less than 20,000 pieces of silver each year'. On the relevance of the system in Bosnia, see Nedim Filipović 'Očaklik Timars, in Bosnia and Herzegovina', *Prilogi* (English version), vol. 36, 1-358, Sarajevo, 1987, pp. 157-80.

Balkan peasantry, each and all, served to promote the acceptance of the Islamic faith and the adoption of its culture.

In fact, according to Balić,⁶ Islam was not entirely unknown to Bosnians before the arrival of the Ottoman Turks. In the fourteenth century, and perhaps as long before as the tenth century, a following had become attached to the Hungarian Ismaelitak. Some were soldiers, or were financial advisers and merchants who were in the service of the Hungarian and Croatian kings. In the twelfth century, they were followed by the Islamised Turkish tribes of the Kalisians in Bosnia, Syrmium and Macva.⁷ The oldest mosque, at Ustikolina, was allegedly built before the conquest of 1463.

Alexander Lopatić — in assessing the general considerations that, in his view, dominated the religious picture in the Balkans, and which account for conversion to Islam over a period — draws attention to the professional soldiers and to the *devshirme* levy of Christian children for training to fill the ranks of the Janissaries, or to occupy posts in the service of the court and the administration.⁸ Here was a forced Islamisation; such too was the deportation of nomads from Asia together with a policy of their colonisation in parts of the Balkans. Less coercive, though in the event equally persuasive, were measures aimed at the conversion of miners in Bosnia and Serbia. However, culturally it was probably the converted local nobility who were the most important. Lopatić mentions the converted as including some members of the Palaeologue imperial family who owned large properties in Bulgaria during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The Ottoman-Turkic or, to cite Antonia Zeljazkova, 'Muslim' colonisation within the Balkans was linked to a specific category of feudal landownership in the Ottoman empire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; namely land *mülkes* and *vakefs*. The central government, when making gifts of land in unconditional and inheritable ownership, depended on the economic interestedness of the *mülk-sahibs* to revive derelict land and restore economic life. To do so they drew on a constant

6. See Smail Balić, *Cultural Achievements of Bosnian and Hercegovinan Muslims*, in *Croatia: Land, People, Culture*, vol. II, pp. 302-3.

7. See Ivo Andrić *op. cit.*, pp. 13-15, together with references in Klaic, *Poviest Bosne do propasti kraljevstva*, Zagreb, 1982.

8. Dr Alexander Lopatić 'Islamisation of the Balkans: Some general considerations', in *Islam in the Balkans*, Edinburgh: Royal Scottish Museum, 1979, pp. 50-1. The whole subject is discussed by V. L. Ménage in his 'Some notes on the Devshirme', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. XXIX, 1966, pp. 64-78.

flow of prisoner-slaves settled in large numbers on their estates. Such migrating groups were of mixed origin. Some were from nomadic Turkic tribes, while others, especially in Thrace and Macedonia, were poor or landless Anatolian peasants. A peculiar category was that of the warrior fraternities, attached to the religious orders, and closely linked to the craft and the trades in Anatolian towns. These *akhs* accompanied detachments of the Ottoman army during its campaigns. Colonisation and settlement, and the *simâr* organisation, varied in character and depth in different parts of the Balkans, so that although the *simâr* system was only formally established in High Albania, as its consequence, that same region, thanks to the settlement elders who became part of the system, remained untouched by colonisation. Few colonists, for example, settled in Kosovo. That was a country of garrisons or administrators in urban communities. Here it was a later generation of Albanian immigrants, and their adoption of Islam, that was to transform it into a bastion of the faith.⁹

One document, translated in a recent corpus of Ottoman documents that has been published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences,¹⁰ furnishes an example for Albania of the way that the *jizya/tizje* tax was imposed in a fashion that both tempted conversion and at the same time undermined the conversion of what at that time had been an overwhelmingly Christian community.

[Document no. 11] The *Qâdî* of Opar brings to the notice of the Porte that the inhabitants of the village of Kilidan, this latter under his dependence, protest against the attempts by the collector of tax *tîzyedâr* to oblige them to pay the general tax. 'We are all of us converted to Islam in our village, save one who has remained a Christian' they said. 'Those who are tax-gatherers affirm, though, that from the moment we are listed in their inventories, we too, are beholden to pay it'. The *Qâdî*, having gone in person in order to verify the situation in the village, had to acknowledge that, 'in fact, in the village, there is only one Christian. All the rest have embraced Islam.'

It is known from the literature that has a bearing upon this matter

9. On the role of the *akhs*, see Mehmed Fuad Köprülü, 'Les Origines de l'Empire Ottoman', *Etudes Orientales publiées par l'Institut français d'archéologie de Stamboul*, III, Paris, 1935, pp. 107-12.

10. *Sources Ottomanes sur les processus d'Islamisation aux Balkans (XVIe-XIXe s.)*, translation by A. Velkov, E. Radušev, E. Siljanove, M. Kaličin, N. Robev, S. Ivanova, edited by Maria Kaličin, A. Velokov, E. Radušev, Sofia: Editions de l'Académie Bulgare des Sciences, 1990, p. 100. See the valuable preface, pp. 23-42.

that, in order to avoid having to pay the tax and to put an end to a humiliating situation which deprived them of all rights, the Albanian population of entire regions declared themselves Muslims, while at the same time continuing to practise the Christian faith in secret. In 1650 the Christian population of the *Qādī' (leaza)* of Spat (Sopot) complained of the fact that among the 1,844 Christian households listed in the inventories of those who were to pay tax, 804 households had embraced Islam, so that the Christian contributors did not exceed 1,040. The tax-gatherer, however, continued to demand from all 1,844 households that they pay the tax, adding those who had remained Christians to pay the tax in equality with the households that had declared themselves Muslims. One is in the presence here of a widespread practice, to which written sources elsewhere bear witness, according to which the financial authorities, and especially the redeemers of the tax, imposed supplementary charges on the Christians and constrained them sometimes to declare themselves in their turn to be Muslim to avoid fiscal pressure. Whole villages declared themselves Muslim, while in reality they continued to observe Christian customs and, unknown to the authorities, to profess their Christian religion.

The English traveller M. Edith Durham, who passed through this same region at the close of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, noticed that the Albanian mountaineers there 'called themselves Konstantin in front of Christians, and Sūlayman in front of Muslims'. They observed the fast, would receive communion, and be married following both Christian and Muslim rites. They would publicly frequent the mosques and, in secret, the churches. Certain villages would even have clandestine priests. When an inhabitant died there would be a funeral service through priests of the Greek church, and subsequently burial in a Muslim cemetery. This simulated conversion to Islam was transformed into a mode of existence that was convenient for villages and even entire districts. They had to pass, in the eyes of the Muslim authorities, the test of being Muslims. To be exempt from the poll-tax, they had to pay less heavy taxes and escape the discrimination that weighed upon the subject Christians. At the same time, these men continued for centuries to keep their Christian faith. 'It was natural that at the first favourable opportunity these threw off their Muslim cloak, in order to return openly to the bosom of the Christian church.'¹¹

11. M. Edith Durham's books, *High Albania*, London, 1909, and *The burden of the*

Apart from Bosnia, Albania at the time of its conquest was a feudal society. It had been in part subject to the Nemanjić state and then to the Dušans in Serbia. It was in part a land in a state of transition from family patrimonies. Unlike Bosnia, the Albanians were a coherent ethnic unity although their feudal families did not organise themselves into an independent Albanian state. Villages were built around churches and monasteries, and a rigorous and militant resistance to Islamisation was to last up to and beyond the death of Skanderbeg in 1468.

Islam and the Balkan city

Viewing Yugoslavia as a whole, Hasan Kalešić¹² concluded that, with the exception of parts of Bosnia and Kosovo, Islamisation and conversion to the faith from the fifteenth century onwards took place faster in the towns than in the villages. In 1485 Peć had thirty-three Muslim houses and 104 Christian. Skopje had 623 Muslim as opposed to 263 Christian. Prizren had four large Muslim districts and nine small Christian ones. Prishtinë, a mere village some forty-seven years before the battle of Kosovo in 1389, had become a Muslim town by the fifteenth century. Strategic urban growth and development, Oriental in type, took place in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and also Greek Macedonia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.¹³ Novi Pazar, on the border of Kosovo, was founded by 'Isā Beg, a governor of Bosnia, under Mehmed the Conqueror. Some evidence of its Islamic character may be observed through its men of letters, particularly in the works of its poets. This is noticeable elsewhere in more peripheral areas. Both Muhammed Caqi 'Arshī (d. 1570) and Ahmād Walī (d. 1598) of Novi Pazar were praised for their love poetry (*ghazal*). Ni'mati (d. 1603) was a bohemian poet who is especially associated with Macedonia.¹⁴ Notably cultured and sensitive was the poet Sulaymān 'Ayānī of Bitolj

Balkans, London, 1905, have numerous examples of Christian and Muslim practice among the Albanians. Pages 203–7 of the latter work discuss the relationship between the two faiths in some detail.

12. See the paper 'Oriental culture in Yugoslav countries from the 15th Century till the End of the 17th Century' in *Ottoman Rule in Middle Europe and Balkan [sic] in the 16th and 17th Centuries*, Prague: Oriental Institute, 1978, pp. 359–64.

13. *op. cit.*, 1978, pp. 359–60.

14. Novi Pazar was a centre for poets. See the article devoted to the town in the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (new edn).

(Monastir), who died in 1603. This town of Bitolj in Yugoslav Macedonia has offered early evidence of proficiency in Arabic and in the endowment of its religious sanctuaries. Hasan Kaleši informs us:

Until several years ago there existed in Bitolj (Monastir) a mosque called 'Eski čami' (the old mosque). It was the oldest mosque in our regions and one of the oldest in the Balkans. Its founder was Sungur Bey, called Čauš-Bey, one of the commanders of Sultan Murat II. It seems that Čauš came from the region of Bitolj and that he was taken to Istanbul by means of *devshirme*.¹⁵ Coming back from a campaign against Skanderbey in Albania, he stopped in Bitolj and he settled there. He built there the mentioned mosque and then a *medresa* and a *zavija*, remnants of which can still be seen in Bitolj. Čauš-Bey also built a *mesdžid* in Jedren and another one in Vidin. For maintenance of these institutions he founded a foundation consisting of 25 shops, one *han* (inn), two pieces of land, 7 mills, 1 vineyard in Bitolj and another 11 shops and 17 rooms in Jedren and a mill at Vidin.

Čauš-bey made his *vakfija* legal between the 9th and 19th April 1435. This *vakufnama* written in Arabic, represents, in fact, the oldest Arabic or Turkish document discovered so far in Yugoslavia.¹⁶

Earlier in this same article, to underline the historical significance of this Arabic document, Hasan Kaleši points out:

The oldest inscription of dating from 842 (24.VI.1438) and the old document, the *vakfiye* of Aladža mosque in Skopje, dating from 848 (20.IV.1444), were the oldest items to have been published until now in Yugoslavia. It is now clear that Čauš Beg's *vakifije*, from an even earlier date, is the oldest Arabic-Turkish document which has so far come to light.¹⁷

John Thirkell, in his study of 'Islamisation in Macedonia as a social process',¹⁸ adds his own comment to the pioneering study of the Serbian scholar Hadži-Vasiljević, pointing out that during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the region of Macedonia with its centre in Skopje (and especially certain of its cities) formed a military 'march' from which the conversion of both Serbia and Bosnia was initiated. The area was a head-

15. See Dr Alexander Lopatić, *Islam in the Balkans*, Edinburgh, 1979, pp. 50-1.

16. *Pribri*, vol. 36, 1-358 (English edn), Sarajevo, 1987, 'The oldest Vekuf Charter in Yugoslavia', p. 250.

17. *ibid.*, p. 233.

18. John Thirkell, 'Islamisation in Macedonia as a social process', in *Islam in the Balkans*, Edinburgh: Royal Scottish Museum, pp. 23-48, including an extensive quotation of recent articles that treat with the Ottoman archive material, especially those published by historians connected with the Institute of National History in Skopje.

quarters for Islamisation and at the same time it furnished a bastion for Islam in its efforts to establish itself in other Balkan regions. This effort particularly characterised certain Ottoman governors, among them Jigit Beg (1392–1414), Ishāq Beg (1414–44) and 'Isā Beg Isaković (1444–63). By 1450 a substantial majority of the dwellers in Skopje and Bitolj were Muslim and their numbers were to increase steadily over the years. In Skopje trade played a key part in the change. The presence of *hans* and caravanserais among the Muslim monuments indicates this; in the Čaršija the fifteenth-century Sulihan and the sixteenth-century Kuršumli Han are but two examples. The Islamic character of Skopje is shown by the seventy-one *Imāms* that it possessed, its fifty-eight *muezzins* and its 377 artisans, a great many of whom were converts to Islam.

A not dissimilar picture typified Bitolj. This is reflected in its Islamic art and architecture in that age. Commenting on mosque architecture in Bitolj, Machiel Kiel has observed:¹⁹

It is clear from a number of Ottoman census documents that the greater part of the Moslem population of Bitola consisted of local converts, especially newcomers from the villages, who became submerged in the culture of Islam. The greater part of the Moslem population of the surroundings of Bitola still speaks its local Macedonian-Slav dialect. It appears to us that the Bitola Muslims kept something of their pre-Islamic attitude towards art. The form in which Ottoman art came to their environment, an early 15th century form, was kept and cherished by them long after the appearance of new forms because their form and manner was the 'real' one.

Bitolj (Bitola/Monastir) was to continue to be a centre for Islamic studies till well into the nineteenth century. The town possessed at least four dervish *tekkes*.²⁰ Two belonged to the *Rifa'iyya* — one of these, the Shaykh Naṣmī Efendi *tekke*, containing the tombs of its founder (1859–60) and of Shaykh Mehmed of Aleppo; one belonged to the *Naqshabandīyya* and contained the tomb of Hasan Bābā whose adventures and miracles allegedly took him to Kosovo, Skopje, Turkey and Egypt; and lastly there was a *Baktāshī tekke* containing the tomb of Husayn Bābā (d. 1872–3).²¹

A study of state endowments (*waqf*/‘*waqufa*’) by Adem Handžić

19. 'Some Reflections on the Origins of Provincial Tendencies in the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans', *Islam in the Balkans*, Edinburgh, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–3.

20. On these *tekkes* see *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 356–7, 524 and *passim*.

21. *ibid.*, pp. 356–7, and Džemal Čehajić, *Derviški Redovi*, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

(published in *Prilozi*, XXV, 1975, by the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, 1977, pp. 134–69) reveals that state policy in the founding of towns in Bosnia was of primary importance. Many towns such as Sarajevo, Zvornik, Foča, Višegrad, Srebrenica, Travnik, Doboј, Bijeljina and Gradiska developed after the building of mosques during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These mosques were called 'Şūltān mosques', built by the order of the Şūltān with state funds. They were well maintained and their *imāms* were paid from state funds. A different sort of town was that founded by prominent personalities or by high officials of state whose endowments consisted in building mosques and Qur'ānic schools. Such foundations by private individuals usually took place after the order of the state authorities. One such town, mentioned by Adem Handžić in his study, founded by the order of the central government in the second half of the sixteenth century, is Kasaba Glasinać, between Sarajevo and Višegrad, in the Romanija mountain range. Its founder Hajj Ibrāhīm Agā, a local official, endowed a number of buildings. There were also such 'waqf' foundations beyond the borders of Bosnia itself. The Sanjaq Beg from Klis, Farhād Beg Sokolović (later Beylerbeg of Bosnia) founded Kasaba Hrvatci, between Sinj and Knin north of Split, and Kasaba Zemunik east of Zadar. Zaim Mehmed Bey of Stolac (in Hercegovina) founded Kasaba Cesta. The names of some of these towns were later changed.

Many of the principal cities in Bosnia and Hercegovina and the Albanian regions owe their monuments and foundations to noted governors. Thus Višegrad owes its subsequent glory to Mehmed Pasha Sokolović, who built a caravanserai and its famous bridge in 1571. Yet earlier (here there is a comparison with Bitolj) Mostar was founded in 1452, together with Jajči and Bihać. The most famous city of all, Bosnia's capital Sarajevo, which had 50,000 inhabitants by the seventeenth century, owes many of its most precious historical monuments to 'Isā Beg (who was there before 1462) and to Ghāzī Husrev Beg.²²

'Isā Beg is an almost legendary figure. His activities and foundations serve to illustrate the two phases of the development of the Oriental settlements in Bosnia and the Balkans in general. An early period which has been described as 'the dervish period', was followed by one that reflected later Ottoman state organisation. Aspects of the first phase are given some prominence in Bosnian folk literature in which the oral

22. Much of the Sarajevo tradition is to be read in Vlajko Palavestra, *Legends of Old Sarajevo* (translated by Mario Susko and William Tribe), Sarajevo, 1987.

tradition of its native populace is coloured, reshaped and retold in the manner of Oriental fable and romance. Such stories as the Old Castle, the accursed Jarina, buried treasure without price, milk pouring down like snow from the mountains and the phenomenon of a peripatetic minaret indicate an earlier rather than a later date. Vlajko Palavestra recounts a legend that brings together the dervish and the governor, 'Isā Beg:

In the western part of the old city of Sarajevo there is a mosque which is popularly attributed to a certain sheik of the Maghreb. When Isa Beg came to Sarajevo he was accompanied by a dervish sheik from the western lands, from the Maghreb, who built a mosque on this spot.

It is said that when Eugene burned Sarajevo, his soldiers captured a woman in the Vinograd *makala* (quarter) and took her as far as Buda, where they put her into service. The woman was a good servant and pleased her masters, but they never allowed her to enter a certain building in their courtyard. Once, when none of her masters was present, she found the keys and opened the forbidden door. She found herself looking at a *kubura*, a wooden casket, above a *mezar* (grave). She fell onto the casket and fainted. Then an old man appeared with an *ahmedija* (a thin cloth) wrapped around his cap and asked her who she was and where she was from. The woman explained to him everything that had happened to her, and that she was a native of Sarajevo. The old man asked her if she knew where in Sarajevo the Maghreb mosque was situated. She said that she knew, and then he asked 'And would you like to be there now?' The woman nodded. The old man said to her 'Stand on my foot for a moment and close your eyes!' She did as she was told and when she opened her eyes again she was indeed in Sarajevo, right outside the Maghreb mosque! It is said that from this time onwards the woman went every Friday without fail to this mosque. She frequented it in order that her wishes might be fulfilled, and she prayed for the soul of the sheik of the Magreb.

The diverse mixture of East and West, culturally and geographically, is not surprising when one recalls Evliya Çelebi's description of this city as an emporium for wares from India, Arabia, Persia, Poland and Czechoslovakia. To 'Isā Sarajevo owes its Serai, its Emperor mosque (*Careva džamija*), its public bath, its hippodrome and its *kolobara* caravanserai. Splendid works such as these were to be continued by successors, above all by Ghāzi Husrev Beg (1521-41) who laid out its streets of crafts and trades (*Čaršija*), its madrasa for higher education (the *vakuf-nama* dates from 1537) and its great mosque (1530) within the precincts of which he lies buried. It is not to be wondered at that a folksong in the city has preserved the memory of these precious endowments:

I built the *medresa* (*madrasa*) and *imarer*
 I built the clock-tower [*sahatkula*] by it a mosque
 I built Tašlihan and the cloth market [*bezistan*]
 I built three bridges in Sarajevo
 I turned a village into the town of Saraj'vo.²³

Smaller towns of lesser fame became centres of cultural and literary activity. One such is Titovo Uziće in Western Serbia. It was occupied by the Ottomans in 1463, in 1476 it had four registered Muslim families and a century later 568. By 1772 this number had not changed appreciably, though by then Uziće had become a substantial town, the second largest in Serbia. Its Muslim population was predominantly of South Slav origin. The town had sixteen principal congregational mosques and many lesser places of worship, including *tekkes* of the *Sufi* orders. A number of scholars and poets in both Turkish and Arabic originated from this town and left noted works on jurisprudence, Prophetic tradition, *Sufism* and legal rulings, and poetic compositions to posterity.

Mosque, tekke and library

It is within the mosques, the *tekkes* of the dervish orders and the *madrasas* (to which may be added the libraries) in the towns of Bosnia, Herzegovina and the Albanian regions that the works of the scholars were written, memorised, studied, copied or preserved. The largest number of mosques were built in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, although fine examples were built later. The oldest mosque is the *džamije* (*xhamië*) in Prishtinë, built by Bāyazīd I and commemorating his victory in the battle of Kosovo. It is now called Carska *džamije*. Skopje possesses the Aladja *džamije* of Ishqāq Beg (1438) and the mosque of Muṣṭafā Pasha (1492). The Ghāzī Husrev Beg mosque in Sarajevo, built in 1530, was among the finest. Later mosques built in the sixteenth century include the Altun-alem *džamije* in Novi Pazar (1550) and one which, till its destruction in May 1993, was among the finest of all, the Banja Luka mosque, the Farhād Pasha, likewise from the sixteenth century (1579).

A number of the dervish *tekkes* of size and fame were founded around 1600, although the Husrev Beg Hanikeh in Sarajevo was built earlier. Noteworthy examples are the Sadi *tekiye* in Djakovica (1600), the Halvetiya *tekiye* in Ohrid (1600) and the *tekiye* in Prizren. Among the

23. Quoted in Džemal Čelik, Zdravko Čavarkapa, *Sarajevo and its surroundings. Pocket Guide for Tourists*, no. 17, 6th edn, Zagreb, 1988, p. 11.



Plate 1. The 18th-century Leaden Mosque (*Xhami e Plumbit*) on the site of the Church of St Mark, sited beneath the fortress of Rozafat at Shkodër, Albania. The multi-domed hall for prayer is a peculiar feature. Old prints (e.g. one in Edward Lear's *Journals of a Landscape Painter in Albania, etc.*, 1851) show a graceful minaret, since vanished.

finest of the later ones is the *tekke* of Sersem Ali Baba in Tetova (Kalkandelen), built in the eighteenth century.²⁴

Apart from mosques and *tekkes*, learning and scholarly activities were centred in the *mektebs* and *madrasas*. Here calligraphy in Oriental languages features significantly as part of the study of Arabic grammar and syntax, the handmaid of Qur'anic studies, theological debate (*usūl al-hadīth*), rhetoric, stylistics and geometry. These centres of learning were at first part of the mosque. Later, large and small towns and

24. On Kalkandelen (Harabti Baba *tekke* Tetova) see Max Choublier, 'Les Bektachis et la Roumérie', *Revue des Etudes Islamiques*, 1, 1907, pp. 427-53.

some villages were endowed with *mektebs*. An early example is that of Sinānuddīn Çelebi in Ohrid (1491), and at Prizren, in Kosovo, a *mekteb* was built by the poet Sūsī Çelebi (1513), who taught there till his death.

The *madrasas* were to be centred in major cities, foremost among them the Husrev Beg *madrasa* in Sarajevo and the Mehmed Pasha *madrasa* in Belgrade.²⁵ Other foundations were those of Sinānuddīn Yūsuf Çelebi (1434) and Ishak Çelebi (1508) in Bitolj and those of Ishak Beg (1465) and his son 'Isā Beg (1469) in Skopje.

Unlike Bosnia and Hercegovina, and indeed the adjacent countries (in part Albanian) of Kosovo and Macedonia, Albania itself offered a modest selection of architectural monuments of an Islamic nature from Ottoman times. As Ettore Rossi explained in 1941 (there has been some depletion since), it was Shkodër which offered an example dating from the mid-fifteenth century in the Sultan's mosque (*xhamiē Hungarit*) of 1478–9, also the mosque of the Arsenal (*xhamiē mbretit*), of 1637–8, and the multi-domed 'lead mosque' (*xhamiē e plumbit*), first built in 1773–4 (Plate 1).²⁶ In Elbasan, the Royal Mosque (*xhamije mbretit*) and the mosque of Hasan Bāši, as well as a number of others, were built or restored in 1608–9. At Krujë (Aq Hisār), the mosque of Murād Bey was first built in 1533–4 and, like so many of the others, heavily restored in the nineteenth century. At Korça, the still surviving mosque of Imrabor Ilyās Bey was possibly first built in 1495–6 (Plate 2) and at Berat, one of the great cultural centres of Albania, the mosque (later a museum) was constructed by Bāyazid between 1481 and 1512 (Plate 3). All these, and other minor structures at Vlorë and Gjirokastër, were much rebuilt in the nineteenth century. For sheer beauty of design the mosque of Edhem Bey in Tirana, finished in 1820–1, is in many ways pre-eminent among all Albania's mosques, although the oldest mosque in Tirana, *Xhamiē e vjetre*, was built by the city's founder, Sulaymān Pasha, in 1651–2. Together with the adjacent tomb (*türbe*), it was restored in 1843–4.²⁷

25. On the mosques and *madrasas* of Belgrade, see Muhammad Mūsākū, *Tārīkh Balghārād al-Islāmiyya*, Kuwait, 1407/1987, pp. 101–22. *Madrasas* are discussed on pp. 31–2. For an exceedingly useful short guide to academic study in Sarajevo, see Mehmet Mujezinović and Mahmud Trajici, *The Ghazi Khushnaw Beg Library*, Sarajevo, Sarajevo, with examples of calligraphy and a glossary.

26. Ettore Rossi, 'Tracce del Dominio Turco in Albania', *Die Welt des Islams*, special issue, 1941, pp. 109–18. This is an excellent article, brief yet rich in content.

27. The mosque is described by A. Degrand, *Souvenirs de la Haute-Albanie*, Paris, 1901, pp. 184–5, as one of those distinguished for its ornamentation and painting: 'Aucune des villes que j'ai vues en Albanie se présente un caractère aussi intéressant.' The mosque has now been restored.

The libraries of Islamic books in Yugoslavia were founded in the fifteenth century. Among the earliest were those situated in the southern and the south-eastern part of the country, adjacent to the Albanian regions, in Macedonia and parts of Kosovo. One that housed Oriental books was founded in Bitolj in 1430, and another in Skopje in 1443. In the following two centuries a number of libraries, whether endowed as *waqfiya* or in wholly private collections, were founded in all the major towns of Bosnia, Hercegovina and Serbia and several of the minor ones. Centres of scholastic learning and endeavour were also located there.

According to Kasim Dobrača,

The libraries grew and expanded mainly through the acquisition of books published in the Islamic world at large. The Yugoslav Moslems maintained throughout the centuries very close ties with the Islamic world. Many of them often visited or studied in the famous cultural centres, such as Istanbul, Cairo, Bagdad, Damascus, Mecca and Medina; others, again, stayed for long periods in the Near East and North Africa, either as merchants or pilgrims or Government officials, often sending books as presents to their fellow-compatriots, or acquiring them for their own use at home and, eventually, making over most of them to local libraries.²⁸

In a number of the towns there were to be found bookbinders (*mudžellits*) or guilds of these artisans. Two streets in the oldest parts of Sarajevo are named after them.

Individuals are remembered by the libraries they founded or expanded. In Foča-on-Drina, one of its large libraries was founded about 1550, attached to the *madrasa* of Hasan Nažir. The second, the Memishahbey library, was founded around 1575. Among the most famous from this period was that founded by Karadjož-Beg in Mostar in 1570, and which was later to house books from other collections in the city. Most renowned of all is the Ghāzi Husrev-Beg library in Sarajevo. According to Kasim Dobrača:

In his directions to the Waqf with reference to the building of his medres-school, Husrev-bey wrote: 'The unexpected balance of building costs shall be spent on good books to be used in the medres-school referred to, so that every and each reader may derive benefit from them and transcribe them for the purposes of study.' It was thus that the foundations of the library were laid.

28. Catalogue of the Arabic, Turkish and Persian Manuscripts, The Ghazi Husrev-Bey Library in Sarajevo, Sarajevo, 1963, vol. 1, pp. xx-xxii.

Arabic and Persian scholarship

The fruit of the education that was implanted may be judged from the wealth of religious and secular literature that was to be produced by the learned in Bosnia and Hercegovina and the Albanian regions. The subject-matter of this literature was mainly determined by this thorough grounding in Islamic subjects. Balić remarks:

The Bosnian-Hercegovinian Muslims were interested in the Arabic language chiefly for religious reasons. They aimed to teach every child at least to read and write vocalized Arabic texts, so that they could read the *Kur'ān* on their own, although this reading, more often than not, was purely mechanical. However, knowledge of this alphabet proved most useful, because not only were Arabic, Turkish and Persian written in Arabic characters, but their native Croatian was as well.

The primacy of the religious interest helped considerably to determine the type of literature produced in Arabic. The prominent subjects were religion, pedagogy, and mysticism, followed by the history of Islam and Arabic philology.

The Bosnian and Hercegovinian scholars (many of whom, and a substantial number of their works, are now known²⁹) wrote the majority of their compositions in Turkish. Their achievement in Arabic and Persian is in its way equally impressive. Among the earliest of these scholars was Mawlā 'Abd al-Karīm (d. 1471). He wrote works on Islamic law and was a glossographer of the major *Qur'ān* commentary by Sayyid Sharīf. 'Alī Dede al-Busnawī was one of the finest commentators on Hafiz, Sa'dī and Rūmī; he was one of the leading scholars who was both a historian and a dervish; he died in 1598 during the seige of Szigetvar in Hungary. The strong influence he received from al-Suyūtī (1445–1505) is manifested on the level of entertainment by his 'Lecture upon first events and the evening entertainment discourse on last things'

29. In order to obtain full details the following studies (among those others in the bibliography which have been listed) have been recommended: Safvetbeg Bašagić, *Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u islamskoj književnosti*, Glasnik Zemaljskog museja, 24 (1912), pp. 1–87 and 295–395; Safvetbeg Bašagić, *Znameniti Hrvati, Bošnjaci i Hercegovci u turskoj carevini*, Zagreb, 1931; Mehmed Handžić, *Književni rad bosansko hercegovskih muslima*, Sarajevo, 1933; Hazim Šabanović, *Književnost Muslimana BiH na orijentalnim jezicima*, Bibliografija, Sarajevo 1973; Alexandre Popović, 'La Littérature ottomane des musulmans yougoslaves. Essai de bibliographie raisonnée', *Journal Asiatique*, 259 (1971), 5/4, pp. 309–76; Smail Balić, *Kultura Bošnjaka, Muslimanska komponenta*, Vienna, 1973; Smail Balić, 'Sudslawen als Mitgestalter der Kultur des Orients', *Der Donau-Raum*, 20, parts 1–2, Vienna, 1975, pp. 23–39.

(*Muḥādarat al-awā'il wa-musāmarat al-awākhīr*), a work of anecdotes about the kings and learned men of the Islamic Orient. However, two of his other works, 'The unravelling of the symbols and the discovery of the hidden treasure' (*Hall al-rumūz wa-kashf al-kunūz*) and 'Lights of the Eastern lands' (*Anwār al-mashāriq*) are both devoted to mystical subjects, the former being concerned with a view of Qur'ānic philosophy. Mysticism also figures prominently in the writings of 'Abdallāh 'Abdī b. Muhammad al-Busnawī, the head of a mosque of Bayramī dervishes who died in Konya in 1644. Of special note is his commentary on 'The bezels of wisdom' (*Fuṣūl al-hikam*) by Muhyī'l-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, the classic work of this greatest gnostic of al-Andalus.

One of the famous scholars and builders of religious monuments in Bosnia was Hasan Kāfi b. Ṭurkhān al-Āqhiṣārī (born 1544/7) from Prusak. He ranks high among Ottoman authors and was a teacher and a judge in Prusak where he died in 1616. His treatise — also his masterpiece — on the policy of the ideal or most effective ruler, 'The bases of wise maxims in regard to the systematic ordering of the world' (*Uṣūl al-hikam fi nizām al-'ālam*), was translated from Turkish into a number of European languages and into Arabic. Other works of his are concerned with metaphysics, philosophy, dogmatics, religious observance and prayer, and jurisprudence. Hazim Šabanović³⁰ regards him as the major literary and intellectual figure in Bosnia in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Between 1600 and 1607, he wrote several outstanding works, biographical and jurisprudential, and contributed over seventeen important works and abridged compositions to Bosnian literature in Oriental languages.

Hardly less prolific was the outstanding scholar of Mostar, Muṣṭafā b. Yūsuf b. Murād Ejubić/Ejubović al-Müstārī (known as Shaykh Jujo/Yūyū), who was born in 1651 and died in 1707. He has been called the 'most prolific' writer in Oriental languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina. His pupil and relation by marriage, Ibrāhīm b. Hadži Ismā'īl al-Müstārī (1678–1726), himself a scholar of no mean achievement,³¹ described him as 'scholar of the time and professor of the era'

30. Hazim Šabanović, Hasan Kāfi Prusčak (Hasan Kāfi b. Ṭurkhān b. Dāwūd b. Ya'qūb al-Zibī al-Āqhiṣārī al-Bosnawī), in *Prilozi*, XIV–XV, Sarajevo, 1969 (German résumé, pp. 29–31).

31. See Omer Mušić, 'Ibrahim Opijač Mostarač (Ibrahim b. Hadži Ismail El Mostari)', in *Prilozi*, SV, X–XI, Sarajevo, 1961, pp. 31–53. These are extracts from his Arabic writings.

(‘allāmat al-zamān wa-’ustādh al-awān). Portraying his attainments in his essay on the pious, even miraculous deeds and feats of his master, entitled *Risāla fī manāqib al-shaykh Muṣṭafā b. Yūsuf al-Muṣṭanī*, a number of its folios are devoted to the piety, humility and devotion to scholarship of this profuse and assiduous man of letters who, at his death, had composed over sixty works, many of them commentaries and glosses on medieval Oriental scholars. His works include such subjects as dogmatics, logic, stylistics, rhetoric, philology, astronomy, geometry and Islamic law and philosophy. Foremost among these compositions were his gloss *Miftāḥ al-ḥusūl li-mirāt al-uṣūl fī sharḥ mirqāt al-wusūl*, a commentary on Muhammad b. Farāmurz b. ‘Alī Mullā Khusrāw al-Tarāsūī (d. 1480), begun during his stay in Istanbul in 1691; his commentary on al-Samarqandī (d. 1483), *Sharḥ ‘alā’ l-risāla al-Samargandiyya fī l-ādāb*; his gloss on al-Taftāzānī (d. 1390) in Logic, *Sharḥ al-tahdhīb ‘alā’ l-mantiq wa’l-kalām*; a commentary on the *Kitāb al-Unmūdhaj* by al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144) and his commentary on logic, *Sharḥ al-jadīd ‘alā’ l-Shamsiyya fī l-mantiq* by Najm al-Dīn ‘Alī al-Qazwīnī (d. 1276). Interesting likewise is his commentary on the Arabic recension of the *Isagoge* of Porphyrius undertaken by Athīr al-Dīn al-Abharī (d. 1265). In all, twenty-nine works in Arabic are attributed to Shaykh Jujo.³²

Among the numerous Bosnian and Hercegovinan poets in Arabic, Persian and Turkish was ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh al-Busnawī Thābit of Uzice (d. 1712), who is credited by E. J. W. Gibb with being the first to introduce a spirit of humour into Ottoman Turkish poetry.³³ Great artistry is shown in his descriptions of the seasons and nature and of historical events. His *Mi’rajīyya*, the ascent to heaven of the Prophet, is full of rich colour and pageantry.³⁴ Gibb, its translator, wrote:

Born in what the biographers call ‘the town of Uzicha in Bosnia, Sābit, whose personal name was ‘Alā’-ud-Dīn began his studies under a certain Khalīl Efendi who had a reputation for learning in those parts. In due time he made his way

32. On details regarding the works of Shaykh Muṣṭafā b. Yūsuf al-Muṣṭarī Ayyūbī Zāde (Ejubović), who died in 1707, see Smail Bašić’s article on the cultural achievements of Bosnia and the Hercegovinan Muslims in *Croatia: Land, People and Culture*, vol. II, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

33. Smail Bašić, *ibid.*, p. 348, and E.J.W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, ed. E.G. Browne, London, 1900–8, vol. IV, p. 16.

34. Smail Bašić, *ibid.*, p. 349, and Gibb, *ibid.*, vol. VI, pp. 234–5.

to Constantinople, where he continued his studies, until, having passed through the several classes of the muderrisate and served as judge-substitute at Rodosto, he entered the second or devriyye order of the magistracy and was appointed molla of Bosna-Seráy, Qonya, and Diyár-Bekr successfully. He received the mollaship of the last-named city in 1119 (1707-8), but before his death, which occurred in 1124 (1712-13), he had retired from public life. The only personal note that I find recorded of Sábit is that he was afflicted with a stutter or stammer in his speech which made him say on occasions 'I cannot speak, but thank God my pen can speak a little; were it too unable to speak, I should split.'

Early Islamic poets in Albania

The impact of Arabic, Persian and Ottoman literature on Albania and the Albanians has been explored in considerable depth at the popular level as well as that of *belles lettres*. Some of the most recent studies have been published within Albania, others outside (in Kosovo especially) and in the West. Albanian compositions in Arabic script, preserved in manuscript, have been consulted and discussed at conferences and in published work. The writings of the late Hasan Kaleši are among the most important.³⁵ In his survey entitled 'Orientalische Einflüsse in den albanischen Volkserzählungen'³⁶ few elements of popular theme, story, folktale and vernacular verse, coloured by Oriental borrowings, are omitted. A more recent study by Muhammed Müsfakü of popular tales among the Albanians and their Oriental inspiration, published in the Syrian journal *al-Ma'rifa*,³⁷ draws attention especially to the Arabic sources for their themes and compositional techniques.

It was in the fifteenth century that the first attempt was made to write in the Albanian language. The most ancient text is the Baptismal Formula of 1462, written by Archbishop Pal Engjell, who collaborated with George Kastrioti Skanderbeg. This referred to family baptism where neither font nor priest was available. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a vernacular literature undoubtedly existed; Marin Barleti, in the Siege of Shkodra (*De Obsidione Scodrensis*), refers to annals he had acquired in which fragments of the famous tale of Ross and her brother

35. In *Südost-Forschungen*, vol. XXXI, Munich, 1972, pp. 267-301.

36. *ibid.*, pp. 269, 274, 287, 277-95.

37. Muhammed Müsfakü, 'Mu'aththirat 'Arabiyya fi'l-qisas al-sha'biiyya al-Albaniyya', *al-Ma'rifa*, Damascus, 191-192, Jan. and Feb. 1978, pp. 49-57.

Fa, the founder of Shkodra (Shkodër) appeared.³⁸ At the same time, Ottoman Turkish words began to enter Albanian after the conquest about 1470. *The Book of Hours* by John Buzuku, composed in 1555 to aid priests in their use of Albanian in the litany, contains nine Turkish words. In the following century, writing developed and the vernacular took a more literary form in the catechisms, dictionaries and eventually verse books by Budi (1621), Bardhi (1643) and Bogdani (1689). The Qur'an was taught almost immediately after the conquest, and the oriental *hikāya* found its way, in theme and style, into popular storytelling. Turkish, Persian and especially Arabic models had an impact on lyrical and emotional verse in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³⁹

Although Mesihi, who was born in Prishtinë and died in Istanbul in 1512 and whose 'Spring Ode' was translated into Latin by W. Jones,⁴⁰ might be preferred, one of the best known of the earlier Albanian poets, who is remembered for his handling of Oriental themes, is Yahyā Bey of Tashlidja (Plevlje in northern Montenegro)⁴¹, a Sipāhī officer and administrator of *vajif* who died in luxury in Bosnia around 983/1575. He claimed as his background the aristocratic Dukagjin (Duca Jean) family near Shkodër, which was descended from a Norman adventurer.

38. The story of the entombed maiden, a sacrifice offered when Shkodra (Shkodër) castle was built, is the subject of many a song in the Balkans, 'Rozafati' in Albanian and 'Zidanje Skadra' in Serbian. The name 'Rozaf' is mentioned in the biography of Nemanja by Stephen I crowned in 1215; it occurs as Rozapha in Marinus Barletius around 1480. The name is explained by childish identifications, although Jirecik has almost certainly given the correct explanation in the Arabic form of Rusafa which was known in both Syria and Spain and in other regions conquered by the Arabs. Rusafa, now an extensive ruin in Syria, is mentioned in the legends of St Sergius, patron saint of Syria, and Bacchus. Beneath Shkodra castle, on the banks of the River Bojana, there was once a noted monastery dedicated to these saints who came from Rusafa. Over a period of time the home-city of the Syrian martyrs was transferred to the adjacent locality which happened to be the formidable castle that dominates the entire plain. On this whole subjects see Stavro Skendi, *Albanian and South Slavic Oral Epic Poetry*, Philadelphia, 1954, pp. 50 and 51. A totally different account is given in James Creagh, *Over the borders of Christendom and Islamiah*, London, 1876, vol. II, pp. 330-3.

39. On the 'Catholic' tradition in Albania before Islamisation, see Stuart Mann, *Albanian Literature: An Outline of Prose, Poetry and Drama*, London, 1955, pp. 1-8, and Kopo Bihiku, *A History of Albanian Literature*, Tirane, 1980, pp. 11-19.

40. See, Ettore Rossi, 'L'Ode alla Primavera del Turco Mesihi. . .' *Oriente Moderno*, vol. XXXIV, no. 1, Jan. 1954, pp. 82-90.

41. E. J. W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, London, 1904, vol. III, pp. 116-31. Note the specifically national sentiment in the poem on p. 117.

In his Ottoman verse he was not ashamed to declare his origin as an 'Arnāud' (Arnā'ūt) and compared his people to eagles or falcons living, like jewels, in their rocky terrain. This imagery brings out clearly the Albanian play with the words *Shqipëria* (Albania), *shqipe* (eagle) and *shkrep* (rocky places). Although his strongest sympathies were for his homeland and origins, it is precisely in his romantic leanings that he displays his ability to fuse East and West into a creative achievement. This is to be seen in his *mesnevis* (extended religious poems). Of these, *Şah u Gedā*, 'the King and the Beggar', 'Yūsuf and Zulaykhā', Joseph (Yūsuf), together with Solomon (Sulejmani), Hazreti Hezer (al-Khidr), Hazreti Ademi (Ādam) and Xhakhima Huxhet (Yājūj wa-Mājūj — Gog and Magog) enjoy great favour among the Albanians, both with men of letters and in popular storytelling.⁴² Joseph and his narrative are also to be found in folk stories.⁴³ Mystical sentiment and ethical counsel mark his verses.

The story of *Şah u Gedā* portrays young Ahmad — called 'the King' on account of his exceptional beauty — who regularly meets his friends at the Hippodrome of Constantinople. A wise and yet begging 'dervish-like' figure from Rumelia has a vision of Ahmad in a dream and, enamoured of him, seeks him everywhere, although his amorous advances are continuously repulsed. The 'beggar' is about to give up in despair, then he is addressed by an unseen and mysterious voice (*hārif*) warning him of the vanity and sickleness of human love. In the view of Alessio Bombaci,⁴⁴ it is the influence of a poet of Herat, Hilālī, who composed Persian verse in the circle of 'Alī-Shīr, that is seen most clearly in Yahyā's verses although the lover and beloved, both males, received strong disapproval in the memoirs of Babur, who took exception to Hilālī's license. Yet Yahyā's treatment is never less than elegant and in good taste. Furthermore, despite the creature of beauty being a king, the story of the quest for 'the beauty of the world' (*bukura e dhet*), 'the beauty of the sea' (*bukura e detit*) and 'the beauty of heaven' (*bukura e qill*) is a most popular and cherished theme in the folktales (*perallë*) and folk epics of Albania, and of considerable antiquity.⁴⁵

42. On Hazret Hezen (al-Khadir/al-Khidr) see Muhammad Müfakü, *al-Ma'rifa*, op. cit., p. 53.

43. Discussed at length by Hasan Kaleshi in his 'Ndikimet orientale në tregimet populare shqiptare', *Buletin Muzeut të Kosovës*, XI, Prishtine, 1972.

44. On *Şah u Gedā*, a poem by Yahyā of Taşlıza (Plevlje, Kosovo) see *Histoire de la Littérature Turque* (transl. Irène Melikoff), Paris, 1968, p. 293.

45. See the extensive discussion in Maximilian Lambertz, XII, *Albanische Märchen*, Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1922.

Certain Albanian stories are borrowed almost directly from the *One Thousand and One Nights*, and Muhammad Müfakü has drawn attention to the theme of 'Ali Bâbâ and the Forty Thieves as the prototype of the tale of *Sezan qılı-Sezan mbyllu*.⁴⁶ These and other popular sources were to emerge in the works of Ottoman and post-Ottoman Albanian poets and prose writers down to the twentieth century.⁴⁷

Islamic popular literature

In common with Turkish and other literatures in the Orient, popular literature of all kinds, including folk epic, developed side by side with the '*dīwān* literature', the love poetry, the scholastic world of commentary, gloss, theological and philosophical speculation, and historical writing. In Bosnia, at Novi Pazar and among the Albanians, particularly in Kosovo, an epic romance may be observed in the *krajina* of the *guslar* singers, the battle *gestes* on Islam's borders,⁴⁸ the *sevdalinka* and *këngë e ashikëva* among the more urbanised communities and, especially from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, an entire corpus of exploits of heroes such as Djerzelez Aliya, and Mujo and Halil.⁴⁹

Dr Rade Božović has argued that themes and forms from Arabic popular *sīra* are to be detected in the 'frontier areas' within the Balkans:

The possibility of close connections between our epic poems and epic heroic story-telling amongst the Arabs is indicated by the large number of typological features characteristic of both and the number of interesting formulaic elements such as drinking the glass of death, black ravens as symbols of disaster, and word duels preceding those with arms. With the Southern Slavs fighting in the Byzantine-Arab frontier area ever since the 7th century, and the epic tradition certainly already existing at the time or somewhat later among the Byzantines and the Arabs, the Slavs could not possibly have remained outside that tradition, and if actual borrowing is uncertain, what is certain is knowledge at least, among Southern Slavs of these epic traditions.⁵⁰

46. See the comment by Hasan Kaleši on p. 378 of his article 'Oriental Culture in Yugoslav countries from the 15th Century till the End of the 17th Century', *op. cit.*; also Muhammad Müfakü, *al-Ma'tifa*, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

47. The love of this was especially to be found among Albanian writers in Egypt, e.g. Thimi Mitko (1820-90), see Robert Elsie, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-9.

48. An immense literature on this subject exists - see B. Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Cambridge, 1960, and André Vaillant, *Les chants épiques des Slaves du Sud*, Paris, 1932. On Albania see *Culture Populaire Albanaise*, Tirane, 1985.

49. See Chapter 4 for a fuller treatment of these heroic cycles, likewise Maximilian Lamberitz, *Albanische Märchen*, *op. cit.*

50. Rade Božović, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

The escapades of Nasruddin (likewise Juhā), in all the Balkans, illustrate the interchange of literary and the popular. Dr Munib Maglajlić remarks:⁵¹

In the oral prose material collected on the territory of Yugoslavia, particularly in the regions which used to constitute an integral part of the Ottoman Empire for short or long periods of time, there is a great amount of evidence testifying to the existence of stories told about Nasruddin especially in Bosnia. Bosnia had a special position with the Empire, while it was under Turkish rule, but we cannot dwell on this matter any further here. This province, a former pashadom, maintained a close and frequent contact with the metropolis. The Turkish language was much more in use than it was dictated by the circumstances, Turkish being the official language of the ruling Empire. Namely, the Slav population, having accepted Islam after the fall of Bosnia under the Turkish rule, which is of extreme importance in the ethical genesis of Bosnian Moslems, used Turkish besides Arabic and Persian, as the language of literature. Furthermore, a considerable number of people were receiving education in Constantinople preparing for administrative and religious functions in their native land or elsewhere in the Empire. As Bosnian Moslems made up the largest population in Bosnian towns as well as in some towns of Serbia until the Serbian uprising, the Turkish language had a special status among certain groups of Bosnian and Serbian town population. This, of course, created favourable conditions for the penetration of Turkish culture in general, and particularly into the oral literature. It is not surprising then, that stories about Nasruddin, which greatly appealed to the people, soon took a prominent place in the folk traditions of the people who communicated in the Turkish language.⁵²

Specific topics from Oriental literature were cultivated and adopted; stories from the *One Thousand and One Nights*, Shah Ismael, Majnūn and Laylā, Farhād and Shirīn, Tāhir and Zahrā, tales of fairy beings and a search for the fairy princess of mountain or sea who is 'the beauty of the world'.⁵³ Some of these stories were Indian or Persian in origin. Others were especially popular in Islamic literature in general, though handled in literature with mixed religious and secular intentions: Yūsuf and Zulaykhā', 'Alī and Fātima, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn and the *Mawlid* of the Prophet. Allusions to these stories, with proverbs and maxims from

51. Munib Maglajlić, 'Nasruddin-Khoja in Bosnia', *III Milletlenarasi Türk Folklor Kongresi Bildirileri*, Ankara, no date, p. 232. Dr Maglajlić contributed a paper, 'The Singer Selim Salihović as a representative of the living tradition of Moslem Folksongs in Bosnia', to the Vuk Karadžić Centenary Conference held in the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1989.

52. See the works by Hasan Kaleši (or Kaleshi) referred to above in footnotes 35 and 46.

Oriental literature, were introduced into the so-called *aljamiado* literature of Bosnia and the Albanian regions. It was composed in the vernacular language though written in Arabic script.

In an article about Romanian tales of Eastern origin, M. Anghelescu has shown that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries such tales were published and disseminated and had a wide readership in many walks of Romanian society. Cycles of stories that include Barlaam and Jēhosaphat, Sindipa the Wise and notably Halima, together with other stories from the *One Thousand and One Nights* were translated from Greek via Syriac, although they reveal an Arabic version as their origin.

The Greek translation keeps an indication not only of its Syriac origin but also of the text out of which it has been translated into Syriac, attributing it to 'Mousos the Persian'. But Mousos, who is mentioned by al-Jāḥīz and by other Arabic sources of the epoch, is Mūsā b. 'Isā al-Kasrāwī, who translated the original text of the Persian into Arabic. Manuscripts in Romania, in their majority, confirm such a double translation from Syriac into Greek and then into Romanian.

Anghelescu adds:

A manuscript of this text (*Sindipa, The Book of Sindibad*), that has still to be studied, Romanian ms. no. 583, in the Cyril and Methodius library in Sofia, was written on 28 February 1795; it contains, besides the *Alexander Romance*, an incomplete version of *Sindipa*, and it attributes an Arabic original to the translation: 'The first word of Sindipa, the philosopher translated from the Arabic language into Moldavian (folio 141).⁵³

This flow of theme, form and Oriental inspiration is of course not entirely explicable in Romania as due to translation from Arabic, Syriac or Turkish alone. There were, and are, other popular levels of transmission within the Balkan regions, via the Gypsies, the Vlachs and other peripatetic peoples and isolated story-telling groups. Thus Marcu Beza has shown in his *Paganism and Romanian Folklore*⁵⁴ that among the Vlachs in Romania and in part of Macedonia, the *zaně* ring-adorned, nymphs (so too their counterparts in Albania), the frequenters of remote forest glades and fountains, and the seducers of beautiful youths, more especially princes, are matched by such creatures as grace the pages of

53. In particular see 'Une vision de la spiritualité arabe à travers les contes roumains d'origine orientale', in *Romano-Arabica*, edited by M. Anghelescu, Bucharest, 1974, pp. 55–68, together with her references to Romanian publications on this theme.

54. Marcu Beja, *Paganism in Roumanian Folklore*, London and Toronto, 1928, pp. 70–94.

the *One Thousand and One Nights*. The nymphs clad in owl-skins, who having stolen golden apples bathe at a pool and are overlooked by a prince, and likewise the story of the prince who gains access to a hidden chamber by the possession of a solitary key, match in great detail such descriptions in the tale of *Hasan al-Baṣrī* and in one part of the massive *Sirat Sayf b. Dhī Yazañ* to which the tale in the *Nights* appears to have some relationship.

A further parallel with these Arabic works can be observed in a sequence in the same *Sīra* where Hasan/Sayf encounters two youths who are in dispute over the possession of a leather cap and a rod of brass. This cap that makes the wearer invisible, coupled with a stave, rod or whip that evokes the response of obedient *jinn* or that will behead the most frightful foe or monster, is obtained by the prince through a stratagem. Not only does this story occur in the Romanian tale of the *Fairy of the Fairies* (which shares the whip and a cap with its Arabian counterpart and a pair of sandals as well), but it is also not hard to discern some parallels with the legend of the maiden, the spring and the magic wooden sword (pairing the rod or the whip) that is so devastating a weapon in the hands of the dervish Sari Saltik (who is also supplied with a flying carpet). Marcu Beza found many similarities between Vlach and Indian, Scottish and Irish tales. He has also discussed the Boy-Beautiful or the Prince Charming of Romanian folklore, the 'youth without age and life without death' which has its peer in Turkish fairy tales.⁵⁵

The best known of the men of letters in the Albanian countries during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries illustrate, in their use of Albanian written in Arabic script (Albanian *Ajamiado* literature) and in other compositions of theirs in Oriental languages, this attractive lyricism and feel for nature that is tinged and sometimes heavily coloured by a mysticism in part Islamic and in part something deep within the Albanian temperament. Muçi Zade is credited with the first verses that have survived and written in the Arabic alphabet.⁵⁶ Composed around 1725

55. *ibid.*, pp. 92ff.

56. The fullest documented source for Muçi Zade (circa 1725) is to be found in Osman Myderizi's 'Leteria Shqipe në alfabetin Arab', in *Bulletin për Shkencat Shqiptare*, 9, Tirane, 1955, pp. 148–54 (esp. p. 151). The handiest introduction for an English reader to the history of the use of the Arabic alphabet in the Albanian language and in its literature is Odile Daniel's article 'The Historical Role of the Muslim Community in Albania', *Central Asian Survey*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 1–28, 1990, esp. pp. 10–16, together with the references. In Arabic see Muhammad Müṣākū, *al-Thaqāfa al-Albāniyya fil-Abjadīyya al-'Arabiyya*, Kuwait, 1983, pp. 38–81, though he has written on this subject elsewhere in Middle Eastern periodicals.

when the author was old, and surviving in a manuscript that originated in Korçë the poem contains seventeen verses (pattern AAAB). It is a light-hearted affair in praise of coffee by a lover of it who has been constrained to give it up. It is the oldest Tosk verse written in Albania.⁵⁷

Of greater importance was İbrahim Naṣīmī, or Nezim Frakulla, who was born either in the 1660s or between 1680 and 1685, and died in 1760. He grew up in the Albanian village of Frakull, near Fier, and came from a good family background. Much of his life was spent in Berat, a city noted for its beauty, its poets and its artists. It was an old Byzantine centre, and to this day it possesses a noted cathedral in which the artistry of the medieval Albanian icon painter Onufri, may be admired. Besides its scholarly pursuits, the city was well endowed with baths and its many coffee houses were frequented by poets. Indeed Evliya Çelebi (1670) mentions its mosques, *tekkes*, *madrasas*, coffee houses and poets.

Nezim studied in the foremost *madrasa* in Berat, and afterwards in Istanbul, where he wrote his first poetry in Turkish and Persian. It seems that he also visited the Arab countries although no Arabic verse by him has survived.⁵⁸ He returned to Berat in 1731, and began to compose Albanian *Aljamiado* verse there. He became engaged in a poetic contest with Muftī Mullā 'Alī, which led to uproar and division in the city. Reports of it reached Istanbul, and the Shaykh al-Islām intervened; Mullā 'Alī was sacked from his post. Nezim was now at the pinnacle of his fame, although this was short-lived. Following a dispute with the governor of Berat at some date after 1747, he was exiled to Khotin in Bessarabia and eventually brought to Istanbul where he died in prison in 1760. Elegies were composed in his honour, and one by the poet Fejzi hailed him as a martyr (*shahīd*).

The *diwān* of some 110 odes contains the first secular poetry recorded in Albanian.⁵⁹ To the fore are nature poetry and love lyrics that he dedicated to his nephew. The everyday life of the people was his primary

57. Muçi Zade's light-hearted poem in praise of coffee is held to be the oldest known Albanian poem (in Tosk dialect) to have been written in Arabic script. It was found in Korça, and verses from it can be read in Haydar Salihu's, *Poezia e Bejetxhinjeve*, Prishtinë, 1987, pp. 131–2.

58. The Oriental influences on Nezim (Naṣīmī, according to Muhammad Müsfakū) are extensively discussed in Ernesto Koliqi, 'Influenze Orientali sulla letteratura Albanese', *Oriente Moderno* (Rome), XXXIV, no. 1, Jan. 1954, pp. 27–33.

59. Muhammad Müsfakū, *al-Thaqāfa al-Albāniyya fit-Abjadīyya al-'Arabiyya*, Kuwait, 1933, pp. 111–18.

concern: 'Whosoever lives in this world then what benefit is there for him to take an interest in the world beyond?'⁶⁰ He satirised hypocrisy. Man should take pride in his good qualities and not his wealth.

Nezim was a bard, an *ashiq*, and he prided himself unashamedly on assuming this mantle. In one of his most noted verses he likens himself to the lover poet and his beloved to the heart, he a nightingale and his beloved a rose, he the breath of spring and his beloved spring itself. He is Majnūn, his beloved is Laylā. He is a patient, his beloved is the physician. He is gold, his beloved is the alchemist. He is the lawsuit, and his beloved the rule and order issued by the judge. He is Farhād, his beloved is Shūrīn. He is a falcon, his beloved is a dove. He is a Muslim, his beloved is the religion. He is the assembly of the Muslim community, his beloved its *imām*. He is Gedā, the beggar mystic, and his beloved is Ahmad the King of beauty (the subject of Yahyā Dukagjin's verse). He is the night, his beloved is the moon. He is the hour of dawn's breaking, his beloved is dawn itself. He is eventide, his beloved is the twilight.

More noteworthy still is Nezim's boast in using Albanian as the language for his verses:

Divan, kush pat folurë shqip
 Ajan e bëri Nezimi
 Bejan kush pat folurë shqip
 Insan e bëri Nezimi
 Këjo gjuhë qe bërtë harap
 me qeder, me shumë hixhap
 Shahit mijast key qitap
 handan e bëri Nezimi
 Vetëmë mos duash, o mik
 këtë gjuhë flet key ashik
 shih udhënë qe s'qe aqik-
 mejdan e bëri Nezimi.

[Who is he who has composed a *dīwān* in the Albanian language? Nezim has clearly done so. An elegant statement, who has composed it so in Albanian. A man, Nezim is his name. Whose tongue was ruined, afflicted, suppressed and concealed. Enough testimony is within this book. Mocking Nezim is his name. O friend, perchance you may not wish to say a poet's tongue composed these words. See how the path is clear and open wide, Nezim is master of the field.]⁶¹

60. On Fejzi, see Muhammad Müfakkü, *ibid.*, pp. 114-15.

61. Ettori Rossi, 'Notizie su un manoscritto del canzoniere di Nezim in caratteri arabi', *Rivista degli studi Orientali*, 21 (1945-6), pp. 219-46.

Arguably less important, was the Berat contemporary of Nezim, the Baktashī Sulejmān Naibi (Ramazani), who probably died in 1771 or 1772. Few of his works, especially in verse, have survived. His lyrics tell of love and of beautiful women. His Albanian is purer and less flavoured with oriental loan words and imagery than Nezim, but even so he used the Arabic alphabet, and poems such as 'Beautiful Mahmūda' (*Mahmudeja e Stolisurë*), which Koço Bihiku calls 'The Dandy burning with Love', are influenced by Arabic verse.⁶² Some of his works were written in Elbasan.⁶³ More significant was Hasan Zyko Kamberi, who was born in the second half of the eighteenth century in Starje e Kolonjes in Southern Albania, and took part in a battle on the Danube in 1789 between the Turkish and Austrian armies. His tomb in Starje was later turned into a shrine (*türba*). Some of his poetry is satirical — for example *Paraja* (money) — and aimed at combating the horrors of war, exploitation and corruption. Others are laudatory, for example his praise of broth. Fifty of his verses are secular, although even here his Islamic heritage is conspicuous. He is best known for his poetry on Abraham, Hagar and Sarah and his *mawlid* (*al-Mawlid al-Nabawi*), his religious *qissa*, and his Baktashī verses that were meant to be recited and meditated upon during the *Ma'tam* in memory of those who died in Karbalā at the hands of the Umayyad Caliph, Mu'āwiya.

Muhammad Müfakū, in his study of the Albanian poets who wrote in Arabic script, comments on Kamberi, drawing upon the studies of him by Hafiz 'Alī and others.⁶⁴

There is no doubt that the interest shown by the Albanians in the celebration of the Prophet's birthday (*al-Mawlid al-Nabawi*) was due to the Ottoman Turks who spread Islam in these regions. In fact, up to now we have nothing that indicates the time when the Albanians began to celebrate the birthday nor what the celebration included on this occasion, though it would appear that the Albanians during the first phase used to depend upon the *Mawlid* of Sulaymān Çelebi⁶⁵ on account of it being the most renowned. Perhaps this motivated the poet Kamberi to write his verse in Albanian so that it could be recited during the celebration among the Albanians.

62. On Sulajman Naibi, see Robert Elsie, *Dictionary of Albanian Literature*, p. 103, and *Poezia e Bejtexhinxive* by Hajdar Salihu, Prishtine, 1987, pp. 143–6.

63. An old centre in Albania for literary activities — see Robert Elsie, *ibid.*, p. 4, and the poets entered under *Elbasani* on p. 39, and F. von Babinger, 'Die Gründung von Elbasan', *Ostasiatische Studien*, 1931, pp. 94–103.

64. Quoted in Muhammad Müfakū, *al-Thaqāfa al-Albāniyya fī'l-Abjādiyya al-'Arabiyya*, Kuwayt, 1983, *op. cit.*, pp. 129–31.

65. See Bombaci, *Histoire de la littérature turque*, *op. cit.*, pp. 258–9.

This *mawlid*, like any other *mawlid* of its kind, indicates a long ode that is composed in fifty-one parts, or sections, each of which comprises four verses. Such tell of the birth, life and miracles of the Prophet Muhammad in an appealing poetic format. Today we only possess one copy of this *mawlid* and it is at present preserved in the archival centre in Tirane.⁶⁶ Even this copy was unknown till recently. This *mawlid*, written by Kamberi the poet, is noteworthy for its original features and for its simple realism. This latter is important, in fact, since if we consider carefully, the *mawlid* is usually written for recitation during the celebration on the day itself and is basically of interest for the simple populace. This determines that it should be in an attractive poetic form and a language close to that which the common people look for and the idiom they are used to. For this reason we do not find it strange today when we come across some illiterates who can remember by heart the Prophet's *mawlid* or at least some sections of it. In reality, the *mawlid* of the poet Kamberi is greatly prized in view of the fact that he encouraged the rest of the poets in Albania to make permanent this poetic tradition in those regions inhabited by Albanians. The poets have continued to compete in this tradition, and have done so up to the present century.

This has led to the creation of a poetic legacy that is especially interested in the *Sira* of the Prophet Muhammad in the Albanian language. It might seem that the great interest aroused by this subject was natural in view of the social position that the poet gained in a situation where, in one region or another, he was depended upon for 'his *mawlid*' during the celebrations marking the Prophet's birth itself. We possess evidence to show that the *mawlid* of the poet Kamberi was widespread among the Albanians in the south [of Albania] and in those regions currently situated in the north of Greece. It is worth drawing attention to the fact that the celebration of the *mawlid* of the Prophet Muhammad — to be precise, 'the recitation of the *mawlid*' in the Albanian regions — is not restricted to the annual remembrance itself of the *mawlid*. Rather, it has been transformed into a social tradition carried out at sundry times: *Rajab*, *Sha'bān* and *Ramadān* and various occasions such as during circumcision and the remembrance of the deceased for forty days. Besides this *mawlid*, the poet Kamberi has left us some other odes concerned with religion. We have a number of them that are part religious and part historical, such as the lengthy ode about the history of Abraham, with Hagar and Sarah.

66. On the *mawlid* of Kamberi and his other verse, see Robert Elsie, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-4. Osman Myderrizi has written a specific study, 'Hasan Zyko Kamberi', in *Buletin për Shkencat Shqiptare* (1955), 1, pp. 93-108.



Plate 2. Korçë's mosque minus its minaret. This ancient town in eastern Albania, with a large Christian population, once had an important cultural influence throughout the country and abroad. In the 15th century a mosque and public baths were built by Hoxha Ilyas Bey, who had taken part in the capture of Constantinople in 1453.

The Albanian writer Dodani is the first person to have been alerted to the importance of this ode when he discovered it about 1822 in one of the *tekkes*. Dodani then undertook to copy out this long ode. He was so greatly surprised and pleased that he deemed it to be a peak of creative artistry. The other poetic works we have are Shi'ite verses by this poet. They belong to his old age, after he had become interested in Sufism, and he had become a dervish of the Baktashī order, which was in essence essentially Shi'ite. Amongst the oldest of the works that we know of is an ode the length of which extends to one hundred verses, called 'Mu'awiya' and this title indicates, aside from the ode's

content, the Shi'ite influence on the Baktashī order. The latter passed it on within the Albanian regions. There 'Mu'twiya' was transformed into the symbol of evil itself from which all other evils stem. Added to this, we have a number of other odes that are dominated by Shi'ite interest and preoccupation, as for example in some poems that deal with the battle of Karbalā and what happened there. In fact the poet Kamberi is considered to be the first poet to exploit the theme of Karbalā in Albanian poetry. It was to be transformed into a major topic in this poetry during the nineteenth century.⁶⁷

A lesser figure than Kamberi — although he is considered so in part because of the small quantity of his verse that has survived — was Haxhi Ymer Kashari, known also as Ymer Mustafa Kashari. He came from Tiranë, and his language furnishes information on the dialect of that city during the mid-eighteenth century. According to Muhammed Müfakū:

Most of his poems have been lost due to an earlier lack of interest in him, though his person enjoys high regard. All we know about him is that he was born at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the town of Tiranë . . . which had become an oriental town at that time although it came into being at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Furthermore, we know that Haxhi Kashari was a shaykh in the Qādiriyā Šūfi order. This indicates the presence of this order in Albania from that time. In regard to his poetry, our information about him shows that he wrote his verse in two languages, Albanian and Turkish. From the few odes that we know of today, we have one known as the *Alif*. This is of a special interest to us since it is the first of its kind composed in Albanian poetry. The poem is based on the letters of the Arabic alphabet (*al-abjadīyya*), and for this reason has twenty-eight verses. Each verse begins with one of the letters of the Arabic alphabet, from *alif* to *yā'*, consecutively. This type of verse was to become a tradition in Albanian poetry and we now have many that have followed the same technique. This poem is also of importance linguistically and historically, seeing that this was the first literary text to have been composed in the dialect of the region of Tiranë.⁶⁸

Early nineteenth-century poets

It is fitting that the pre-*Rilindja* (pre-Renaissance) phase in Albanian cultural, literary and religious history should include a major Baktashī saint, Nasibi Tahir Babai (d. 1835), who founded the *tekke* at Frashër

67. On the theme of Karbalā, see Chapter 5 and in particular the *Qerbelajë* by Naim Frashëri.

68. On Haxhi Ymer Kashari see Muhammed Müfakū, *ibid.*, pp. 121–2, and Robert Elsie, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

in 1825 and was buried there. According to Sami Frashëri,⁶⁹ he composed much verse in Albanian, Turkish and Persian. In his youth he had visited Iraq and other parts of the Arab East. If little of his own verse has survived and the *tekkes* of Frashëri and of Leskovicu, which he also developed as a centre for culture and literature, have also been erased, it was his example that was to fire the imaginations of Naim and Sami in the Albanian Renaissance at the end of the century.

The city of Shkodër was one of the most important centres for Islamic scholars and cultural and literary activity. Daut Boriçi (1825–96) was a significant figure there who favoured the 'revival' and is probably best known in Albania for his Albanian primer in Arabic script, published in Istanbul in 1861, where he had resided for many years, first in a theological seminary and later during a period in exile. In his capacity as an inspector in the Inspectorate of Education, he showed himself a convinced champion of the use of Arabic script for his mother-tongue. This, however, was no exclusively nationalist cause but had strong religious roots, as is evident from his upbringing. He was a student of Hoxha Ferhali of Shkodër (1773–1844) and also studied in Qafës madrasa. He was deeply influenced by theologians associated with Shkodër, including Salih Efendi, Mullah Ahmet Hadri and Mullah Sylo Fakoja, and was himself to become *Imām* of the *Draçin* mosque in Shkodër in 1848.⁷⁰

Two further poets can be counted among the significant figures who wrote verse in the Arabic script up to the middle of the nineteenth century. One was Tahir Efendi, Boshnjaku (Bosnian), who died about 1835. Known also as Tahir Efendi Jakova or *Efendi i Madh*, 'the great Efendi', he is reckoned among the greatest poets who hailed from Kosovo. His life was centred around the town of Gjakovë and later in Bosnia, which he visited so much that the region became attached prominently to his name and title. A scholar of theological bent and steeped in the literary arts and metrical skills of Arabic, Persian and Turkish poetry, he is principally famous for his long poem *Emni Vekbie* (Offering), printed in the Istanbul alphabet in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1907 – although the poem itself had been composed in 1835. Tahir Efendi prefaced his verses with Arabic meters, in this instance a form of *Ramal*, *Fā'ilatun, fā'ilatun fā'ilat* (*fā'il-un*) followed by the *basmala*, the *ḥamda* and praise of the Prophet (*Pejjamberit*). Throughout his works rhymed

69. Robert Elsie, *ibid.*, p. 103, and Nathalie Clayer, *L'Albanie pays des derviches*, Berlin, 1990, p. 277.

70. Robert Elsie, *Dictionary of Albanian Literature*, op. cit., p. 18.



Plate 4 An external wall-painting in the Edhem Bey mosque, Tirana, one of the finest surviving mosques in Albania. The interior is lavishly decorated with floral designs, and scenes in Constantinople are depicted. In the 18th century, Albanian artists were skilled in such decorative painting and examples exist in Bakëshë tekkes at Krujë and elsewhere.

prose, citation of Qur'anic verses and Prophetic *hadith* are employed to varied effect. A number of this writer's works have been lost, and one of these concerned the duty of revenge as it was once demanded and effected among the Albanians.⁷¹

The second of these poets, Etëhem Mollaj (1783–1846), has particular associations with Tirana. Known also as Haxhi bej Tirana Etëhem, he was noteworthy in Albanian literature for composing mystical verse in both Turkish and Albanian; four of his *dīwāns* were in Turkish. A man of substance, he was buried, according to Muhammad Müfakü, in

71. Robert Elsie, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–19, and the poem *Emmi Vekbie*, quoted in Haydar Salihu, *Poezia e Bejetxhmjive*, *op. cit.*, pp. 212–31, and shorter verses.

1848 in the Tiranë mosque that bears his name. This Xhamija e Haxhi Edhem Beut mosque was begun in 1791 or 1794 by Molla Bey of Petrela (d. 1806), the nephew of Tiranë's founder, and finished by his son Etëhem Bey in 1819 or 1821.⁷² Graced with most attractive interior wall-paintings completed in 1820–3, and beautifully balanced architecturally, it has been described by Alexander Meksi and Gjerg Frashëri as 'an important monument of the architecture of the last centuries of the Middle Ages . . . It bears witness to the quite lofty levels that were reached among us not only in its construction but likewise through its architecture. All these elements make this monument one of the most successful realisations of Islamic architecture we have.'⁷³

Etëhem Bey, as already mentioned, was laid to rest in this monument, and beside him sleeps his wife Balkis. Yet it is the paintings of flowers, of a town surrounded by a hill of cypresses and pleasure boats, reminding one of the Bosphorus at the end of eighteenth century, that linger most in the memory. The blend of a local art with the quintessence of Ottoman art at its most delicate is seen in the skill of these artists (Plate 4) whose work in paint is a perfect match for the verse of those Albanian poets who, as has been said, were the pioneers of the Albanian ode inspired by the Muslim East.

With the works of the poet Muhamet Çami, or Muhamet Kyçyku (1784–1844) — perhaps the major figure in Albanian literature of Oriental inspiration during the first half of the nineteenth century — a new outlook on the world can be noticed. He has been regarded as the representative of a literary transition between the classical Islamic verse of such poets as Frakulla, Naibi and Kamberi and the poets of the Albanian Renaissance towards the end of the century. He grew up in Konispol in southern Albania, and then went to Cairo for eleven years to study at al-Azhar University. He returned to Konispol as a *hodja* although without a doubt his stay in Egypt, in scholarly Islamic surroundings, left a permanent mark on his style and his choice of subject. Muhammad Müfakü sees in him one of the principal sources for Egyptian Arabic influences on modern Albanian literature. He was an innovator.⁷⁴ As a poet and a literary figure he received a brief mention

72. Alexander Meksi and Gjerg Frashëri, 'Architecture et Restauration de la mosquée de Haxhi Ethem Bey à Tirana', in *Monumentet*, 14, 1977, Tirana, Ministria e Arsimit dhe e Kultures, Instituti i Monumenteve te Kultures, pp. 125–44.

73. *ibid.*, pages 143–144.

74. Muhammed Çami is also known as Muhamet Kyçyku (1784–1844). See Robert Elsie, *op. cit.* p. 84, together with a number of references. See also pp. 136–43 of Muhammad Müfakü, *al-Thaqâfa al-Albâniyya fi'l-Abjadîyya al-'Arabiyya* *op. cit.*, pp. 136–43.

in Visoko in 1477. The dervish Muslihuddin founded a *zaviya* in Rogatica a little before 1489. About 1519, the Hamzevi *zaviya* was sited on the Srebrenica-Zvornik road. In Zvornik itself a public kitchen, together with a *zaviya*, was founded by Bahši-Beg in 1530. In the mid-sixteenth century a *zaviya* was founded at Prusac, and in the mid-seventeenth century the dervishes played a significant role in the Skender Vakif settlement.⁵⁵ The close personal connection between the ruler and the dervish goes back to the days of 'Isā Beg. According to Vlajko Palavestra,⁵⁶

Isa Beg Ishaković, the second son of Ishak Beg, was governor of the Brankovic lands, and later Sanjak Beg of the Bosnian Sanjak (1464–8). In the spring of 1448 he stormed into Bosnia and, after laying it waste, permanently occupied the Vrhbosna district together with the castle of Hodidjed. In 1463 he played a decisive role in the destruction of the Bosnian kingdom. He laid the foundations of today's Sarajevo, which took its name from his palace. In the summer of 1464 he was appointed Sanjak Beg of the Bosnian Sanjak for the second time. His name is mentioned for the last time in 1472. The present structure of the Sultan's Mosque was built only in the 16th century, on the site of an older mosque which must certainly have been built before 1462, and which its founder 'Isā Beg later presented to the Sultan Mehmed II, the Conqueror, whence its name.

Sufism, however, was not neglected by 'Isā Beg. Vlajko Palavestra adds:

In the western part of the old city of Sarajevo there is a mosque which is popularly attributed to a certain sheik of the Magreb. When Isa Beg came to Sarajevo he was accompanied by a dervish sheik from the western lands, from the Magreb who built a mosque on this spot.

Sarajevo became, and remained, a major centre for Sufism and its orders. Even today the *dhikr* (*hadra*), the spiritual exercise designed to ensure God's presence throughout one's being (J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam*, p. 302: the 'lauding of the Almighty' or, as Shaykh Baba Rexhebi describes it, 'a repeating of the names of God, by invocation either silent or vociferous') is still regularly held in the *tekkes* of different orders. In the days of Asboth, who wrote in 1890, these services still maintained the ecstatic expression that survives today in

55. On Skender Vekif, see Džemal Čehajić, *Derviški Redovi u Jugoslovenskim Zemljama*, op. cit., pp. 41–4.

56. Vlajko Palavestra, *Legends of Old Sarajevo*, op. cit., pp. 39.

Kosovo but is otherwise more characteristic of the Sūfi Orders in India and the Arabic Middle East:

The most frequent meetings of the dervishes also fall during the time of Ramazan: one Friday we witnessed the ceremonies of the Howling dervishes. Towards ten o'clock in the evening we started for Sinan-Thekia, which is situated tolerably high up upon the hillside on the right bank of the Miliaska. This Thekia — Dervish monastery — takes its name from its founder, the celebrated Bosnian Dervish Sheik, who was held in great respect, and was even credited with being a sorcerer. We found a quiet, deserted place, a building in ruins. We were cautioned to mount the wooden stairs with care, and to take our places quietly in the broad wooden gallery: not only because the ceremonies had already commenced, but also that the rotten timbers might not give way. The broad, dome-covered hall was only dimly lighted by a few tapers. Opposite to us there stood, in front of the Kibla (the niche for prayer), which faced towards Mecca, a haggard old man, with a white beard and gloomy visage, in a pale, faded caftan, and the green turban of the sheiks. Before him stood a circle of about twenty men in the dress usually worn by the Mohammedan middle classes in Sarajevo: respectable water-carriers, merchants and artisans. For just as Islam knows no ecclesiastical hierarchy, so the dervishes form no particular order, as our monks do, for example, even though they, like them, rely upon mysticism and asceticism. As a whole the ceremony differs little from what which I have seen in the heart of the Mohammedan world. But a closing scene followed, which I had nowhere beheld before, and which in its affecting solemnity is unequalled. Whilst one of the dervishes commenced to put out the lights in rotation, the others, one after another, with signs of the deepest reverence, approached the ancient sheik, still standing before the Kibla, and bent low before him; after the salutation each was twice embraced by him, and whilst he who had bidden farewell withdrew in silence, the next advanced to the sheik. The simple naturalness, the deep affection, which was manifested in this silent scene, is quite indescribable. Upon the stage at the close of an act it would make one of the most effective of closing scenes. Yet where would one find so many actors who would, in the constant repetition of the same action, understand how to combine such free, dignified bearing with such reverent awe; the earnest dignity of the sheik with his fatherly affection? One light after the other had been extinguished, one dervish after the other had withdrawn, and ever gloomier did it grow in the dome-covered hall, darker the picture, more vague the dignified form of the sheik, until at last he stood there alone, hardly visible now, by the glimmer of the one remaining taper. My companions had already departed; but I could hardly tear myself away from the scene in which such deep, such true and noble sentiments had been displayed.⁵⁷

57. J. de Asboth, *An Official Tour through Bosnia and Herzegovina*, London, 1890, pp. 206-9.



Plate 6. The outer courtyard of the Sinān Pasha *tekke* of the Qādiriyya order in Sarajevo, built in 1640. The circular painting on the wall was once of significance for Sufi meditation and rituals. Hajj Sinān and his wife are buried in an adjoining cemetery. Till recently, this handsomely restored *tekke* was regularly used for weekly *dhikr* and prayer and was a centre of Sufi activity in Sarajevo.

that is included in his short biography of Muharem Mahzuni Baba of Gjirokaster.¹⁰¹ This important *shaykh* of the nineteenth century served for a while in the famous *tekke* of Farsalla in Thessaly, that was founded by the missionary Durballi Sultan in 1480.

Krujë

Krujë may be selected as a locality to shed light on this early period. The Albanian town — 'wellspring', a fortress spectacularly sited — was surrendered in 1478 to Muhammad II. It became known as Āq Hisār and until recent times remained one of the most important historical centres of the *Baktāshiyya* (Plate 7).¹⁰²

A. Degrand, who wrote about Albania at the end of the nineteenth century, conveys the character of rural life of the *Baktāshiyya* and especially of the Babas of Krujë. Although he admits that little opportunity was afforded to him to discuss matters relating to the doctrines of the order, or to examine the content of its religious buildings closely, he found it possible to devote a number of his pages to the basic beliefs of the *Baktāshiyya* among the village communities near Krujë at a time when their curious eclecticism was still widely maintained. These beliefs were about the mystical chain of Ḥājjī Baktāsh with its improbable chronology, the high regard for the position of women in the sect, the adoration of 'Ālī, the 'house-church fellowships', the non-observance of the fast or of communal prayer, and the strong national feeling that permeated all religious denominations within Albania at that time. The miracles of Ḥājjī Baktāsh, as told by the far-flung *Baktāshī* community (as it then was), have much common hagiography. However, Degrand singles out several of the leading saints, Ṣūfīs and Babas of Krujë for an extended chapter on *Baktāshī* hagiography.¹⁰³

Degrand places Baba 'Ālī chronologically at the beginning of the sixteenth century (a date that must be considered as far too early). He came from Khurāsān and settled in the lower part of Krujë where he built a *tekke* — a simple affair, consisting of four planks of wood from a cypress tree. Within the shelter thus afforded, he lived from the alms given to him by the locals on account of his good works and wise

101. Baba Rexhebi, *Misticizma Islamë dhe Bektashizma*, op. cit., pp. 270–1.

102. F. W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, op. cit., pp. 549–57. The *tekke* there has been reopened.

103. A. Degrand, *Souvenirs de la Haute-Albanie*, Paris 1901, pp. 228–48.



Plate 8. The elaborate gravestone of a Baba buried outside the eastern end of the Dollma tekke in view of the range of mountains above Krujë, where one of the alleged tombs of the saint, Sari Saltik, is situated.

counsel. One evening he said to the humble townsfolk who visited him that he would be going on a long journey. On their way to work in the fields the following day, they saw a large cypress tree at the place where he had sited his primitive tekke the four planks had been transformed into this tree. The body of the Baba was laid to rest next to the tree and a türbe was built above the grave. Baba Bali ('honey') Efendi also originated from Khurāsān. He came to Krujë, it was said, at the time of its capture by the Muslims. One day he met a man leading a horse that was carrying wine. He asked him what the animal was transporting, and the man in his embarrassment told him it was honey. The saint replied that it would indeed be honey from that time onwards, and when the man arrived at his destination he found this to be so. Zemzem Baba, at an unknown date, met a sick person who begged for water from the Meccan well of Zemzem. The dervish tapped the ground with his staff and at once fresh water gushed forth. The sick man knew its taste, drank of it and was cured. The staff was transformed into a magnificent cypress tree. The türbe of Zemzem Baba was sited below the bazaar.

Baba Hujjat secured the word of the Sultān in Istanbul, and a *fīrmān* was given to the effect that the people of Krujë were excused taxes. This *fīrmān* was written upon a bronze plaque, and so was preserved. This Baba, too, was buried locally, though in a painted türbe. Shaykh Mīmī, an agent of 'Alī Pasha, founded a tekke at Krujë in 1807¹⁰⁴ near to the tekke of Bābā 'Alī. He was murdered by Kaplan Pasha and the tekke was ruined. It was restored by Bābā Husayn of Dibra who was attached for a while to the Farsalla tekke in Thessaly, during 1794. The restoration took place during the mid-nineteenth century. Bābā Husayn lived to a great age. His successor Bābā Hajjī (Haxhi), born in Krujë, was much travelled, but his efforts to purchase and employ machines to work his mill and farm aroused the hostility of some of the pious in Krujë, who made them unusable.

Babinger and Birge were amongst the first Western Orientalists to mention tombstones around the zāwiya of Murteza Bābā. This building dates from the beginning of the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁵

However, Machiel Kiel in his research about the cult of Sari Saltik Dede in Krujë has established some observances of the cult there around

104. On the evidence for or against this proposed chronology see Nathalie Clayer, *op. cit.*, pp. 325–32, under 'Ibrahim Shemimi Baba'.

105. *ibid.*, pp. 326–32.

imposing is the number of mausoleums whose cupolas rise here, there, and everywhere above the dark groves of the cypresses.

The *türbe* of Bali Sultan is particularly important, because solemn oaths are made by the coffin of this saint. Haji Hamza Baba belongs to the older of the Bektashi saints; his death is said to have occurred already in 1533 (940 AH), that is, about the same date as Ali Baba. At that time Krooya had long been under Moslem rule. The outstanding landmark of the town — the castle which dominates the whole neighbourhood — was three times besieged in vain by the Turkish sultans, first by Murad II and later by his son, Muhammad II.

A Macedonian *Baktāshī* mystic, a poet of importance, lived in the mid-sixteenth century. This was Sersem Ali Dedje, a contemporary of the reformer, Bālim Sulṭān. According to Baba Rexhebi, his family ties were with the region of Tetovo in Macedonia and with Kosovo. After a promising career as a *vizir* in the administration of Sulṭān Sulaymān the Magnificent (1520–66), he was drawn to the mystical quest of the *Baktāshiyya* and served for nearly twenty years in the *tekke* of Hacibektaş,¹⁰⁷ eventually returning to Tetovo where, allegedly, he founded the *tekke* of Kalkandelen and was buried within it. The *tekke* later fell on hard times. In a *vakusname* of Redzep-pasha dated 1799, the construction of a complex of some size is mentioned.¹⁰⁸ According to Hasluck, it was refounded by 'Riza Pasha' at the behest of the *Baktāshī* shaykh, Muhamrabe Baba. The Kalkandelen *tekke* came to be known as Harabti-baba *tekke*. It was a beautifully designed complex of celibate dervish-quarters with a number of meeting halls and refectories and a library. A cult grew up surrounding the personality of Sersem 'Ali Dedje (d. 1569) who was believed to have been the original founder. Local Christians identified him with Elias. A wooden sword was hung above his tomb.

The southern Albanian town of Gjirokastër was also for centuries an important centre for *Baktāshī* propagation and literary activity. One of the oldest Babas to laud it in his verses was Arshi Baba, who was born in Diyarbakir in Anatolia and died in 1621. In the following century Sayyid Asim Baba, who was born in Istanbul, studied in Hacibektaş and moved to Kara Ali Dede *tekke* near Dimetoka in Bulgaria, arrived in Albania in 1778. He founded a *tekke* in Gjirokastër in 1780 ('one of

107. Baba Rexhebi, *Misticizma Islame dhe Bektashizma*, New York, 1970, pp. 209–13.

108. See F.W. Hasluck, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 205–6.

the oldest in Albania' according to Hasluck),¹⁰⁹ and under his headship it established daughter establishments in southern Albania. He died in 1796. Together with his successor Hasan Bābā Turku (1796–8), he was buried at the gateway to the tekke. Later this tekke had many links, through its scholars and Babas, with Elbasan.

In the nineteenth century, Haxhi 'Alī Haqi Baba (d. 1861), who was associated with the growth of the Gjirokastër daughter houses, was a noted traveller in the Middle East. He visited Iran as well as the holy places in Arabia. He wrote a *Siyāhetnāme* of 1000 pages and a 5000-page composition on mystical terms and technical expressions (*istilāhāt sūfiyya*).¹¹⁰ During this same period, lived Muharem Mehzuni Baba, who was born in Gjirokastër. He was resident in the tekke of Durballi Sultan (1480–1522) in Thessaly between 1845 and 1867, and he was buried there. This tekke was one of the most famous of *Baktāshī* establishments in the Balkans and from its well endowed and imposing portals went forth numerous missionaries, among them 'Alī Rismi Dede Khorasanli who founded the *Baktāshī* tekke at Candia in Crete in 1650. According to Robert Elsie¹¹¹, Muharem Mehzuni Baba composed Turkish verses that were 'permeated with Arabic vocabulary',¹¹² although his style would appear to be an indulgence in the use of *Hurufī* symbolism, his employment of the Arabic letters for numerical purposes, with reference to Qur'ānic verse and to dates of religious significance. He also wrote in Albanian and he maintained contact with the tekkes in and around Gjirokastër. He was the twenty-seventh Baba of the tekke at Durballi Sultan.¹¹³

An important Albanian *Baktāshī* scholar of the nineteenth century was Baba Abdullah Meçani or Melçani (d. 1852), who some hold was the true founder of the Melçani tekke near Korça. Much of his verse is concerned with Sūfīsm and in one of the poems that is best preserved he

109. See Baba Rexhebi, *op. cit.*, p. 288, and Nathalie Clayer, *op. cit.*, pp. 280–90.

110. On Haxhi 'Alī Haqi Baba, see Baba Rexhebi, *Misticizma Islame dhe Bektashizma*, *op. cit.*, pp. 291–302.

111. Baba Muharem Mehzuni, in Robert Elsie, *Dictionary of Albanian Literature*, New York, 1950, p. 96.

112. This is only intermittently obvious from the examples of his poetry published in Hajdar Salihu's, *Poczia e Bejteshinxve*, *op. cit.*, pp. 235–9, and in Baba Rexhebi, *Misticizma Islame dhe Bektashizma*, *op. cit.*, pp. 269–75.

113. On the ultimate fate of the Durballi Sultan tekke see F. de Jong, *The iconography of Bektashism*, *op. cit.*, p. 18, note 98.

is laudatory towards Sari Saltik (Sari Saltek Baba) and other saintly personages of the *Baktāshīyya*. According to Baba Rexhebi, he was a Geg (an Albanian from the north) and a painstaking and energetic dervish. He was inspired by the guidance of Qemaluddin Shemimi and by the Babas of Krujë. He was also inspired by such scholars as Baba Husayni (Hysejni), who was of the Melçani tekke, and who was likewise buried there. He inspired Baba Tahir Prishtë who founded the tekke in Prishtinë.

The Albanian mystical verses of Baba Abdullah Meçani were highly prized. He extols Sari Saltik alongside Ahmad Muhtar (Mukhtar) who is none other than the Prophet Muhammad, 'Alī Dhū'l-Faqār who is called Zylfikar, Hunqar Haxhi Bektashi, and all the sacred scriptures of the monotheistic faiths without any distinction. He and his order, above all, typify the syncretic character of *Sufism* in much of the Balkan peninsula. However, this development evolved over a period of time and owed much to its Albanian environment.

Muhammad Müfakü has remarked:

The *Baktāshīyya* remained in its primitive and original state for a while in Albania. It had not evolved beyond the war-cry that called for *Shī'ī* vengeance for [the blood] of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and his offspring. To compensate for this, its teachings lacked any special bias against Christians or against beliefs of others. This led to the *Baktāshī* tekkes being open to everyone. Furthermore, the *Baktāshīyya* took upon itself to explain, interpret and comment on the statutory rites and canonical duties in accordance with their peculiar way and order. It excused and allowed its members from performing the canonic observances — prayer, fasting, and the like — just as it allowed them to drink wine, lawfully, and so too make use of other things that were prohibited. To balance this, the *Baktāshīyya* promoted its own rituals and observances. Its individual establishment for the members was the *tekke*, which was devoid of any niche for prayer towards Mecca [*qibla*]. The gatherings for the *dhikr* and the recitation of it in séances belonged to varied ranks and orders. These took the place of statutory prayers, and the form of a circle was adopted so that each man faced another. In this way the *Baktāshī*s protested against the facing of any specific direction in order to pray, 'since there is nothing better for you than to face, or turn your person towards, another human being'. It would appear that these matters were encouraged and enjoined [on members], together with a *Baktāshī* emphasis on the unity of all that exists (*wahdat al-wujūd*). [members] who were a section of the Muslims who entered and among whom were traces and elements of Christian belief. So in the *Baktāshīyya* they found an unusual solution [to their dilemma], enabling them to combine their

former Christianity with their outward and open confession of the Muslim faith.¹¹⁴

Dervishes were once highly colourful characters in the Balkans and were occasionally described by Western travellers in Albania, Epirus and Thessaly in the early nineteenth century. Not infrequently, the person portrayed was unfriendly and suspicious, unusually fanatical and at times stupid and unlettered. We do not dispute the sincerity of these travellers, or the fact that many drop-outs and beggars somehow found their way into the multifarious orders that competed within the Balkan peninsula. However, there were also highly cultured, poetic and dedicated men and women among them. One of the most warming descriptions of a dervish in Greece at that time is that in Henry Holland's *Travels in the Ionian Islands, Albania, Thessaly, Macedonia, etc. during the years 1812 and 1813* (London, 1815, pp. 283-4):

Our party, in leaving Larissa, was further increased by a Dervish travelling to Salonica, and by another Turk who was taking the same route. The Dervish belonged, as I believe, to the class of these *religieux* called the Bektashis: his dress was that most common among the Dervishes, a long cloke made of coarse white woollen, and on his head a tall white cap, in form nearly resembling that worn by the Tartars. His beard was of remarkable length: though sanctified by his character, he wore pistols in his girdle, while over his shoulders was suspended a long leathern case containing a *mandolin*, which we afterwards found to be a most important part of his travelling equipage. Though his exterior had something of uncouth wildness, his manner was gay, good-humoured, and civil; he seemed to court an intercourse with us, and sought to beguile the way by the chaunting of Turkish songs, a species of music which more engaged the ear by the loudness than by harmony.

114. These and other often very critical views (understandable in view of his Arab readership) are to be found in the author's article 'al-Baktāshīyya', in *al-'Arabī* (Kuwait), no. 220, March 1977, pp. 64-8 (esp. p. 66).

MUSLIM HEROES OF THE BULGARS, THE TATARS OF THE DOBRUDJA, THE ALBANIANS AND THE BOSNIANS

Let us give thanks unto the Almighty who brings us forth from nothing into light!

*The sun shines forth in all its strength, yet how meagre is the warmth it gives!
The wintry squall bends the elms at Jutbina.* A bitter hoar-frost carpets the terrain.*

The snowy beech-trees bow to breaking point. Only the tips of maple-trees are seen.

Avalanches sound within the valleys. They tremble, roar and fill the deep ravines.

When the shepherdesses went to tend the sheep beside the river bank, they saw that the river bed was frozen. They traced their path to springs though these were all with hoar-frost covered.

*Alarmed, the shepherdesses pondered, 'What will happen to our animals?
When is it the Lord's will to melt the ice and snow?'*

'Good Lord' they cried, 'who are these wayfarers princely clad? To us like knights they seem!'

Have they not gone to scout those frosty tracts that block all channels?'

At this point Jera answered her companions, 'Sisters, there are no nymphs who, but a while ago, next to the river stood.'

Ti's Muyi who, with heroes of his own, goes forth to tramp the woodlands and to seek for game.'

(From 'The marriage of Halil' in Ismael Kadare and Kole Luka, *Chansonnier épique albanais*, Tirana, 1983, pp. 156-7. For a full analysis of this folk-epic, see Maximilian Lambertz, 'Die Volksepic der Albaner', *Zeitschrift der Karl Marx Universität*, Leipzig, vol. 4, 1954-5, pp. 243-89.)

* Jutbina is the fortress of the Albanian and South Slav hero Muyi Mujo, whose exploits, with those of other Muslim heroes of the Balkans, are described by Stavro Skendi in his *Albanian and South Slav Oral Epic Poetry*, American Folklore Society, 1954.

The demented dervish prince was caressed by Sari Saltik who called him 'my dog' (*baraq*). He was sent to Sultāniyya, and later died there. This city came to be associated with Baraqī and his disciples. Wittek points out the minor role played by Sari Saltik; furthermore, his people in the Dobrudja were said to have renounced Islam and forgotten it after his death. It is interesting that elements in this account correspond closely to the role played by Sari Saltik generally in the Balkan lands where stories about him were to be embellished, and attached to his peripatetic exploits and his numerous tombs, caves and *tekkes*. Wittek remarks:

Most interesting for our present study is the fact that Baraq presents a Christian as well as a Muslim aspect: born a Muslim prince, he is baptized and becomes a monk in the patriarch's retinue, only to end as the founder of a mystic dervish order. The same is true also for Ṣari Ṣaltiq: he appears on the one hand as the spiritual leader of the Muslim nomad Turks and on the other hand he is regarded by the patriarch as a saintly man to whom unhesitatingly he entrusts the newly converted prince. This Christian aspect of Ṣari Ṣaltiq is clearly recognized in a *fetwa* of Abū's-Su'ūd, which has just come to light. This outstanding scholar and sheikhulislam of the 16th century describes Ṣari Ṣaltiq as 'a Christian monk (*keshīsh*) who by asceticism has become a skeleton.¹⁵

Halil Inalçik relates these exploits to the historical events that seem to be the basis for some of the themes expanded in the folk-epic which stress the unorthodox beliefs of Sari Saltik himself.¹⁶ Sari Saltik shares the characteristics that mark the heroic adventures of warriors of the faith in other epical tales and legends in the Arab and Turkish worlds, tales that were based on the expeditions (*maghāzī*) of the Prophet's Companions and on those later Arab and Persian heroes about whom gestes were elaborated and recounted; superhuman characters such as Sayyid Baṭṭāl, Melik Dānishmend and Abū Muslim al-Khurāsānī. Here there is a close association with the *Akhīs* (the *Akhīyat al-Fityān*, plural of the *akh*, 'the generous and the chivalrous', one who in his person and status personified the ideal of Muslim chivalry) or with the artisan class. Sayyid Baṭṭāl, who also became associated with the *Baktāshīs* among the Turks, is not only an Arab hero of very great prowess, but also a lineal descendant of the Prophet and an adventurous *ghāzī* whose feats are directed at infidels whom he either converts or slays. But he is also

15. *ibid.*, section 12, *The Baraq Story*, pp. 660-1.

16. Chapter XIX, 'Popular Culture and the Tarikats-Mystic Orders', in *The Ottoman Empire: The Classic Age, 1300-1600*, London, 1973.

scholarly and lettered. Like Abū Zayd al-Hilātī he is a master of disguise; he can appear as a monk and argue with Christian theologians. His feats are interlinked, through his warriors and his relations, with those of the revolutionary, Abū Muslim.¹⁷ The episodes in the *geste* of Dānišmend are likewise to be included within the corpus of all these cycles of folk-epics and feats of Muslim gallantry.

To such adventures can be added all that is recorded about the exploits of the warrior dervish Sari Saltik, under whose direction, as Alessio Bombaci describes,¹⁸ a colony of Turcomans emigrated into Europe towards the middle of the thirteenth century. His exploits were narrated towards the end of the fifteenth century by Abū'l-Khayr Rūmī at the command of the Ottoman prince Djem. This took a written form although it would appear to have been based on some earlier corpus. In Alessio Bombaci's view, the exploits of Sari Saltik show a marked resemblance to those of Sayyid Baṭṭāl. Early Arab and Muslim heroes and Persian champions, joined to all the wonders and marvels found in the *One Thousand and One Nights*, were here introduced. Saltik is mounted on Simorgh, the fabulous bird. He is anointed with the grease of the salamander, which assumes the form of a winged steed that is impervious to heat and is untouched by fire: it traverses the Mountain of Fire, and with its rider reaches the remotest land of darkness that is the kingdom of Ahrīman, the personification of evil. In Persian mythology he takes the form of the dragon-headed *dīv*. In the folk-epic, which is set in the days of Osman, he predicts a glorious and illustrious future for his family. Elements in the story were to be adapted with little difficulty to folk-epics and heroic tales among Balkan peoples, but since in all traditions of folk-epic and popular romance this process is difficult to date one cannot say when a dragon-headed *dīv* was replaced by an Albanian hydra, or when Sayyid Baṭṭāl, dressed as a monk, may have become Sari Saltik, armed with his wooden sword and disguised as an al-Khadir or as a Christian saint.

Sari Saltik was incorporated into all the hagiographies of the *Baktāshīyya*, especially in the *Vilāyetname* of Hājjī Baktāsh. He came to

17. The 'epic' facts of Abū Muslim are exhaustively surveyed in Irène Mélikoff *Abū Muslim. Le Porte Hache du Khorassan dans la tradition épique Turco-Iranienne*, Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1962. See also *La Geste de Melek Dānişmend*, vol. 1, Paris 1960.

18. His name is spelt Sari Saltikh Dede. According to Alessio Bombaci, *Histoire de la Littérature Turque* (transl. by I. Mélikoff), op. cit., pp. 263-4. The adventures were narrated towards the end of the fifteenth century by Abū'l-Khayr Rūmī, at the command of the Ottoman prince Jem.

be associated with certain spectacular feats: a flight over water on his prayer-rug, the conversion of the prince of Georgia to Islam, the cutting off of the heads of a seven-headed dragon in Kalagria (Kilgra near Varna in Bulgaria), and a lifetime spent in countless localities converting unbelievers (including the king of the Dobrudja) by his miracles and feats.

A number of such interconnected exploits, and the magical powers of Sari Saltik, may be traced in the corpus of the hagiographical lore of the *Baktāshiyya*, some of it Central Asian. Irène Mélikoff has shown how *Lokmān Perende* (the flying *Lokmān*), the master of *Hājjī Baktāsh* had the power to fly and to wander without head or feet. Sun-like, he was called *Shams-i-Perende* (the flying Shams). He had the power of ubiquity, appearing in different places at the same time. *Hājjī Baktāsh* also had this power, as also did *Pīr Sultān Abdāl* and *Bābā Rasūlī*. All of these men were seen in different places after their deaths. Sari Saltik's bird-like flights, and his descents in Georgia, Bulgaria, Albania and Corfu are examples of *Baktāshī* hagiography.

The seven coffins of Sari Saltik match a story in the *Vilāyetnāme* about the dervishes of Khurāsān who sent seven of their numbers with the intention to invite Ahmed Yasavī to their meeting. They changed themselves into cranes, and then flew to Turkistan. Irène Mélikoff has drawn our notice to a comment made by Mircea Eliade that 'the power of flying belongs to the world of myth; it is connected to the mystical conception of the soul under the form of a bird and of birds as guides of the soul'.¹⁹

The essential elements of the Sari Saltik cycle of stories, as they are retold among the Albanians and other Balkan peoples, as well as the *Baktāshī* Turks and Turcomans, are present in the high-medieval *Vilāyetnāme* of *Hājjī Baktāsh*. Leading motifs (such as have been identified and discussed in this *geste*)²⁰ include the first encounter between *Hājjī Baktāsh* and the shepherd, Sari Saltik, at Zamzam well, near Mecca and Mount 'Arafāt, Sari Saltik gaining spiritual strength from the blessed eye of *Hājjī Baktāsh*, and the command given to Sari Saltik to go to Rūm and to the Balkan regions. His receipt of a wooden sword,

19. *Lokmān Perende*, the master of *Hājjī Baktāsh*, was a disciple of Ahmed Yasavī. According to Irène Mélikoff, citing Abdulbaki Golpinarli, there are three applicants to this title. She sees a connection between this title and that of *turma*, a 'crane'. Many holy men had power to change themselves into a bird.

20. Described in Erich Gross, *Das Vilajet Name des Haggi Bektaesch. Ein Türkisches Derwischevangelium*, Leipzig, 1927. Ahmad Sirī Bābā, *al-Risāla al-Ahmadiyya*, pp. 49–51.

encamped at Aq Kirman and Kiliya — the tombs and mausolea of their chiefs were to be seen near the Danube. Mention is made of Tarkhan Yazishi, Salpi (Yalpi?) Guli, Qutlu Bahaqatli Suwiyy, each of these deriving its name from tribes that formerly resided there. The Oghuz occupied the right bank of the Danube and the Tatars the left; from there they launched further raids. At that time, a detachment of the army of Barakat Khan passed through Wallachia, traversed the Balkans and advanced towards the Hungarians who sorely defeated the outnumbered Muslims in the region of Mohacz. The old scores were about to be settled.²³

Here there is a blending of Ottoman and Tatar traditions. They converge geographically at the Danube Delta, north of Babadag. The existing towns of the Bratul Chilia arm of the river in Romania, and Kiliya and Ozero Jalpug and Ozero Katlabuch in Moldavia, give some clue to the geographical heart of these legendary and factual *jihāds* on the fringes of the Balkans.

The feats of Sari Saltik extend beyond the holy places of Islam in the Balkans. They take place in the heart of Catholic Christendom, even within northern Europe, and furthermore his exploits are concluded in the narrative with the last will and testament (*waṣiyya*) made by him before his death; the last instructions which he gave to his son and to his Ghāzīs. They were to prepare up to seven coffins in each one of these his body would appear. F.W. Hasluck takes up this story:

A certain dervish, by name Mahomed Bokhar, called also Sari Saltik Sultan, who was a disciple of the celebrated Khodja Achmet of Yassi [d. 1166/7 AD] and a companion of Hadji Bektash [d. 1326–60], after the conquest of Brousa was sent with seventy disciples into Europe. In his missionary journey Sari Saltik visited the Crimea, Muscovy, and Poland: at Danzig he killed the patriarch 'Svity Nikola' and, assuming his robes, in this guise made many converts to Islam. He also delivered the 'kingdom of Dobrudja,' and in particular the king's daughter, from a dragon: this miracle was falsely claimed by a Christian monk, but Sari Saltik was vindicated by the ordeal of fire and the king of Dobrudja was in consequence converted to Islam. Before his death the saint gave orders that his body should be placed in seven coffins, since seven kings should contend for his possession. This came to pass; each king took a coffin, and each coffin was found when opened to contain the body. The seven kingdoms blessed by the possession of the saint's remains are given

23. *ibid.*, pp. 77–8. The rivers allegedly crossed by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa would seem to make best sense if they referred to the three main arms of the Danube in the Delta area or to these other waterways in Moldavia. See the article on *Babadagli* by Bernard Lewis in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*.

as (1) Muscovy, where the saint is held in great honour as Svity Nikola (S Nicholas); (2) Poland, where his tomb at Danzig is much frequented; (3) Bohemia, where the coffin was shewn at 'Pezzunijah'; (4) Sweden, which possessed a tomb at 'Bivanjah'; (5) Adrianople, near which (at Baba Eski) is another tomb; (6) Moldavia, where the tomb was shewn at Baba Dagh; and (7) Dobrudja, in which district was the convent of Kaliakra containing the seventh tomb'.²⁴

In the *Saltiqnāme* the number of rulers — kings and beys — is increased to a figure of twelve: the Tatar Han and the kings of the Vlachs, Edirne, Boğdan (Moldavia), Russia, Hungary, Granada (in Spain?), Croatia(?) and Poland, although Sari Saltik had stressed that his real or 'master' coffin, or sarcophagus, would be at Baba Eski in Thrace. The enhanced number may not be unconnected with the magical number of the twelve *Imāms*, the twelve letters in the declaration of faith, the confession of the Prophethood of Muḥammad, and the recurrence of this number in so much of the numerical symbolism of the *Hurūfiyya* and the *Baktāshiyya*.²⁵ According to Margaret Hasluck,²⁶ the secret rites once performed by the Albanian *Baktāshīs* at sunrise and at sundown included the saying of prayers by the *bābā*, the recitation of the *Qurān* and the lighting of twelve candles for the twelve *Imāms* on a three-tiered altar. To this may be added further *Şūfī* and Eastern Christian parallels (one recalls the seven angels, seals and churches of Asia in the Book of Revelations). The seven bodies of Sari Saltik recall the notion of the seven *abdāl* (*badal*, substitute). Belief in this heavenly hierarchy dates back to the *Şūfis* of the ninth century. They conceived of the cosmic order as possessing a fixed number of saints at any one time. However, the number varied; Ibn al-'Arabī (d. 1240) established their number as seven, each corresponding to a prophet — Adam, Moses, Aaron, Idrīs, Joseph, Jesus and Muḥammad. Each exercised sway over one of the seven climes into which the world is divided. But there are other localities in the Balkans and in Asia Minor that perpetuate the memory of Sari Saltik's resting-place, including Baba Eski, Iznik, Bor near Niğde in Anatolia, Diyarbakir and possibly other still unidentified or unlocated sites.

24. F.W. Hasluck, *Christianity and Islam under the Sultans*, vol. 11, p. 577.

25. For probably the most detailed study of the numerical design of the Cabbala of the *Hurūfi* sect, see John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*, London, 1937, 1965.

26. Margaret Hasluck, 'The Nonconformist Moslems of Albania', *The Moslem World*, vol. XV, 1925, pp. 392-3.

Babadag (Babadagh) 'the mountain of the father', has remained an important religious centre, in Muslim memory. In the Cairene journal *Nūr al-Islām*, published by the *Mashyakha* of al-Azhar (part 10, Shawwāl 1350/1932, vol. 2, p. 741–2) this locality was singled out for special comment:

The Muslims reverence the town of Babadag, on account of the presence there of the tomb (*dārīh*) of Sārī Saltī (sic) whom the Muslims consider as a Muslim saint and holy man. It was he who, after having colonised the Dobrudja, began to propagate Islam as far as Lake Ohrid in Albania. Muslim *muftīs* are represented in four localities in [Romania] Tulcea, Constanța, Silistra and Bazargik [now in Bulgaria]. In Romania there is a *madrasa* of the highest rank for teachers in the city of Majīdiyya (Medgidja). Among the *tekkes*, there are three, for the Qādiriyya, the *Baktāshiyā* and the *Shādhiliyya*.

Degrard in his *Haute Albanie* – published in 1901, though written in 1892 – has one of the most comprehensive accounts of the destruction of a seven-headed hydra at Kalagria in Bulgaria, or at Krujë in Albania by Sari Saltik. His account, owing to its date, has special value. Others draw upon him. Almost every facet of the story – the destruction of the monster with a wooden sword, the rescue of a princess who identifies her rescuer from other suitors by means of three apples, the sojourn of a holy dervish in the cave, his flight by stages on a prayer carpet to Corfu, his forty identical coffins (corresponding to the *Abdāl*) – are all found. Of particular value is Degrard's hearsay description of an alleged sarcophagus *türbe* of Sari Saltik in the mountain overshadowing Krujë. The pilgrim station and the narrative cohere in almost every detail, and furthermore the parallels between the Krujë story and those that mention Sari Saltik's very similar exploits in Bulgaria or in Romania are well described. Variation and similarity may be explained by a stitching together of folk narrative derived from some *Ur-narrative* that reflects the *Vilāyetnāme* itself or its sources. This narrative has been employed to interpret local cults, whether in Romania, Bulgaria or in Albanian regions.

Krujë, Sari Saltik and Gjerg Elez Alia in Albania and Bosnia

F.W. Hasluck attributed the various episodes that involve Sari Saltik at Krujë to the *Baktāshīs*. A similar opinion was held by Hasan Kaleši, who gives by far the most comprehensive account of the local Albanian